PCGAMES

If you play games on your PC, you've got to read PC GAMES!

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June/July 1994
Printed in the UK
1

3 INCREDIBLE DEMOS!

- TIE Fighter!
- Heimdall 2!
- The Settlers!

Are we good to you or *what*?

NO DISK? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!

NO DISK? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!

PLAY & WIN!
PLAY our Heimdall 2 demo and WIN a multimedia 486 PC worth over £1500!

EXCLUSIVE!

BIG GUNS!

We take the wraps off Origin's most innovative game ever — the amazing BioForge! Read all about it in our EXCLUSIVE in-depth preview!

REVIEWED! Over 40 games, including MegaRace, Genesia, Myst, Pagan: Ultima VIII, Cannon Fodder, RavenLoft and Fleet Defender. **PLUS! First review of PACIFIC STRIKE!**

PREVIEWED! Battledrome, Desert Strike, World Cup USA 1994 and TIE Fighter exposed and ready for your perusal!

TIPPED! Complete solutions to Gabriel Knight and Police Quest IV, plus Sim City 2000 and Litil Divil playguides!

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SO REAL

Group C
Friday June 17
Chicago/Soldier Field
Germany v Bolivia

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U.S. GOLD®

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Product

...of a missed penalty in a SHOOT OUT that could take you to the World Cup final. That's the reality of World Cup USA '94 from U.S. Gold.

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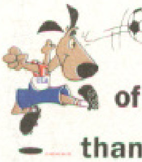

You get *more* options, *more* CUSTOMISATION, *more* frames of animation and *more* playability than any game ever, plus a few unique SURPRISES guaranteed to keep your opponents guessing.

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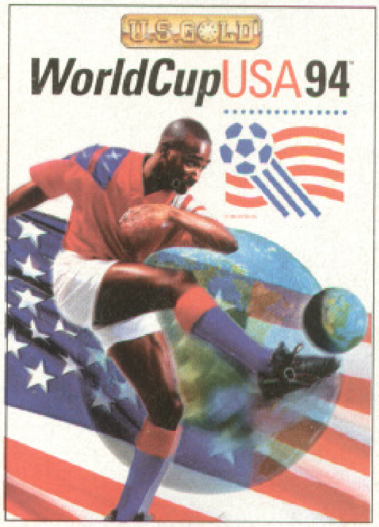

...this is a game for players.

It's out on *June 3rd* and it's the *only one worth waiting for*

WorldCupUSA94™

© 1991 WC'94 / ISL

Welcome!

A few months ago a magazine appeared called WHAT PC GAMES. It was only intended to be a one-off special, but so positive was the response to it that The Powers That Be decided to do it again on a bi-monthly basis. The result of that momentous, earth-shattering decision is in your hands, and it's called PC GAMES.

So what is PC GAMES? Well, it's all about games, games and nothing but games for your PC, whether they be on disk, CD or anything else for that matter. The PC is the future, and I hope you'll join me over the coming months as we face it together. These are exciting times...

And who am I? I'm the Editor, David Upchurch. In my time I've worked on magazines such as the late, lamented ACE and The One For Amiga, and have played more games than I've had hot dinners – which, as you can tell from my photo, is quite a lot.

But naturally I don't write and produce the mag on my own, so who are the other hard-working souls who put this baby to bed? Come with me, I'll introduce you...

Dean Evans
Assistant Editor

Chisel-jawed Dean used to work for our sister mag PC REVIEW, but grew tired of reconfiguring his soundcard and formatting his SCSI port – which is why he now works for us. He likes flight sims and space games mainly, but he'll play anything given half the chance – well, it's better than working, isn't it?

Alex Fraser
Staff Writer

'Our' Alex is finding writing for PC GAMES all very exciting – he's never worked on a magazine before, although he's as keen a PC gamesplayer as any. However, we gave him the job because we recognise raw talent when we see it – and because it's cheaper than employing an experienced writer.

Dave Kelsall
Art Editor

Dave is responsible for the way PC GAMES looks, so now you know who to address your letters of complaint to. At least, we *think* that's what he does – most of the time he just sits at his design Mac doing monkey impressions. I suppose that's what you call 'creative' – I personally call it 'bloody stupid'.

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Cryptic quote: "I feel like chicken tonight, quack-quack-a-doodle, oops!"

© EMAP Images 1994

WIN!
A multimedia 486 PC! Turn to page 22 to find out how...

6 Disks!

You see those cellophane-wrapped squares stuck to the front of the mag? They're called 'disks', and they're your plastic passport to software heaven – and here's where you'll find out how to use them.

12 News

If it moves then it's a news, and you'll find it killed, stuffed and wall-mounted somewhere in these pages. On top of that there's a gaggle of features and columns, including Imp on his soapbox, Sir Harvey Barrington's Classic Moments In Games and the mysterious True Stories.

22 Win A Multimedia 486 PC!

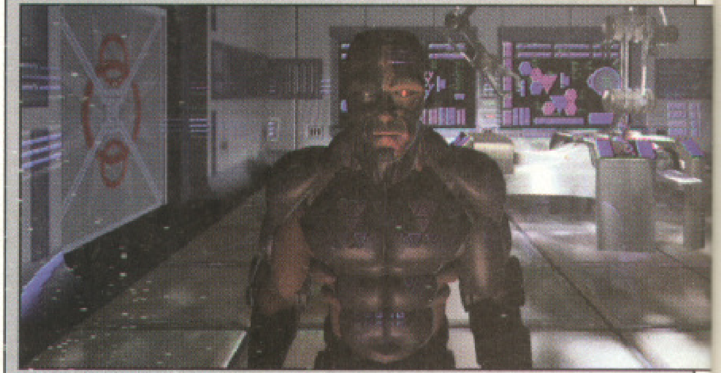
Winning a massive ú1500 prize was never easier – or more fun! All you have to do is play the demo of Core Design's fab Heimdall 2 and you could win a multimedia 486 PC!

25 Previews

You would no believe what we've managed to get sneaky advance looks at! Oh, alright, so you would – but all the same there's some pretty hot stuff here, including Origin's stunning BioForge, Dynamix's Battledrome, Renegade's Flight Of The Amazon Queen, LucasArts' TIE Fighter, Gremlin's Desert Strike and US Gold's World Cup USA 1994. Asbestos gloves should be worn at all times...

BioForge.......................26

It's the game they're all talking about! Well, they are at Origin in Texas, anyway, but soon so will you after you see how utterly brilliant it's looking.



40 Hooray For Hollywood?

The software companies seem to have gone movie mad! But are they wasting their – and our – time? Will Interactive Movies ever be really interactive? We take a look at the whole phenomenon...

45 Reviews

This is where stacks of the latest games are ripped open and their entrails thoroughly examined to see what they're made of. Reviewed this month are such biggies as Origin's Pagan: Ultima VIII and Pacific Strike, Software Toolworks' MegaRace, Virgin's Cannon Fodder, Millennium's Diggers, MicroProse's Dragonsphere and... ooh, far too many to list here. Just go and dive in.

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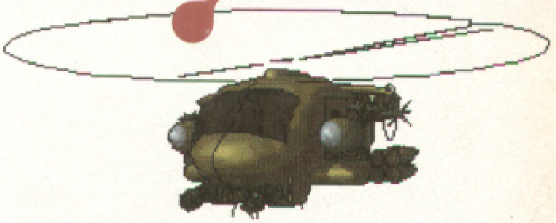
94 Budget Reviews
So money's too tight to mention, but don't despair — you can still pick up some corking (if old-ish) games at low, low prices thanks to the burgeoning budget market.



98 Yours... For Less Than A Fiver!
What!? Can't even afford a budget game!? There's hope for you yet, as top Shareware titles can be had for the price of a pint of beer. We'll help you sort the wheat from the chaff.

102 What Would The Papers Say?
What if there was a tabloid journalist on hand to record all the kerrazy things that happened in PC games? What would our newspapers look like? Something like this, probably...

104 Power Up!
A while ago we took a couple of weeks off and played Gabriel Knight, Police Quest IV, Litil Divil and Sim City 2000 to death. These tips are the results of our investigation.

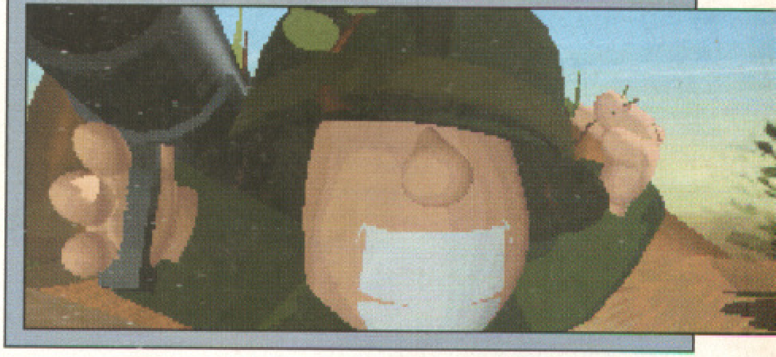
120 From Tiny Acorns...
The White Wizard takes you on a magical mystery tour through the history of computer games, for it is only by knowing the past, that we can understand the present. Or something like that, anyway. It's great for nostalgia buffs if nothing else.

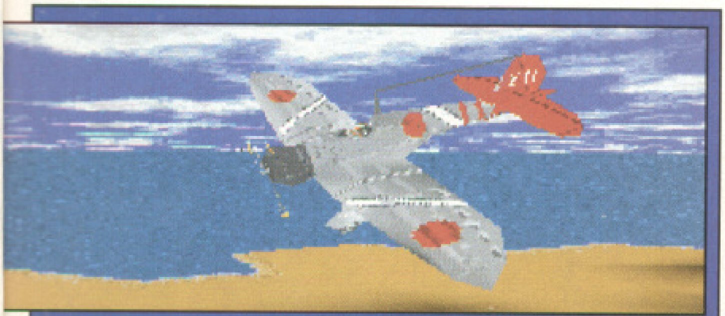
127 Letters
Actually it's not. Turn to page 127 NOW for a little surprise and the chance to win some free software.

130 Next Issue!
So soon it ends. But we'll be back in a couple of months with more goodies, which are clearly (and probably inaccurately) listed here.

Cannon Fodder............64

Can Sensible Software do no wrong? Seems not — in fact, this is their best game ever, which is why it earned an amazing... Ah-ha-ha, turn to our review and find out for yourself.





Pacific Strike...............90

It's Strike Commander with propellers in it! But is it an unwieldy crate or a soaring bird? Find out in the FIRST review on page 90.

DISKS THIS WAY!

Simply turn the page to discover the hidden secrets of TIE Fighter, Heimdall 2 and The Settlers! Bet you can hardly wait...

Disks!

Two high-density coverdisks! Over 9Mb of playable demos! Yes, we're so excited, we're going to explode. Not one, not even two but three exciting demos have been painfully but firmly squeezed onto the PC GAMES coverdisks. How can you play them? What do you do? Read on, dear reader, read on...

PCGAMES

Requires 256-colour VGA, 2Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 486 PC and joystick recommended

DISK 1 Tested for ALL known viruses!

EXCLUSIVE!

TIE Fighter

Feel the *power* of the Dark Side of the Force in this fully-playable complete mission from LucasArts' eagerly-awaited sequel to X-Wing!

PCGAMES

Requires mouse, 256-colour VGA, and DOS 5.0; 386 PC recommended

DISK 2 Tested for ALL known viruses!

EXCLUSIVE!

Heimdall 2

Requires 2Mb RAM

Play this slice of Core Design's fab arcade adventure and ***WIN*** a multimedia 486 PC worth over £1500!

The Settlers

Requires 4Mb RAM

Is Blue Byte's latest the cutest God game ever? Find out for yourself in this fully-playable demo!

Loading Your Coverdisks...

1. It couldn't be simpler. Remove your disks (the square black things with the bit of metal on them) from their beautifully-crafted protective wrapping and put the disk of your choice gently into your disk drive.

2. Type **A:** (or **B:** depending on the drive type) and then press the Return key to log onto your gorgeous PC GAMES disk.

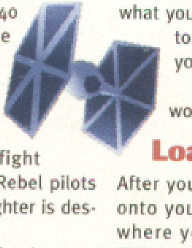
3. Type the legend **PCG** and press the Return key. Choose the program you want to load using the up/down cursor keys. Obviously on Disk 1 there is only one choice.

TIE Fighter

US Gold/LucasArts

Your attention, please. PC GAMES, in association with US Gold, proudly present for your gaming pleasure one of the most eagerly awaited games of the year... Ladies and Gentlemen, pray put your hands together and cheer until your throat catches fire for the one, the only, the completely exclusive, TIE Fighter demo.

TIE Fighter. From LucasArts. The people who brought you X-Wing, Monkey Island, Day Of The Tentacle and Rebel Assault. Yes, by purchasing this very issue you can now play a whole 40 minute mission from the forthcoming space epic.



Take control of a nimble but fragile TIE Fighter on a vital mission to destroy an unguarded Rebel repair yard. Defend your corvettes from Y-Wing attacks and dogfight amongst the stars with some of the best Rebel pilots ever to graduate from the Academy. TIE Fighter is destined to be the next big thing.

Why does such a seemingly easy mission become one of the hardest battles you'll ever have to fight? Will you thrill to the new features, cry to the theme tune, wet your...

Hey, do you know, I've no idea why I'm writing this. No-one is going to read it. Everyone will just rip the disk off, slap it into the PC and start playing the demo. Oh, they might come back here when they can't get it to work or when they don't know what the keys are, but any beautiful descriptions or sexy metaphors that I might make up about our brilliant TIE Fighter demo are wasted.

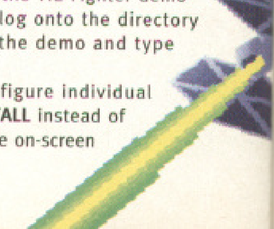
So go on. Skip down to the control summary. That's what you're really interested in, isn't it? And don't try to pull the Imperial wool over my eyes, I know your sort...

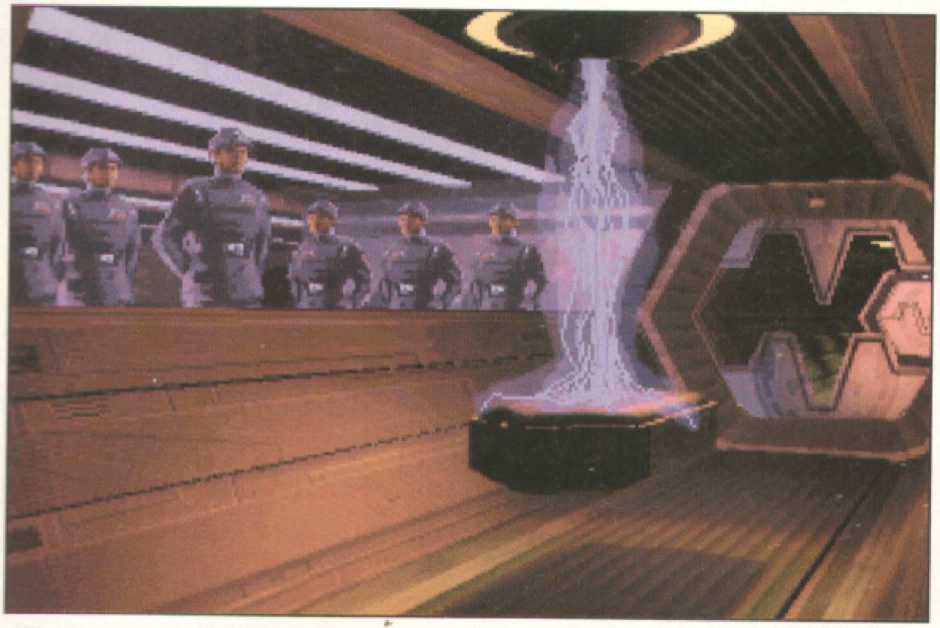
TIE Fighter. It's brilliant. But don't take my word for it, have a go yourself.

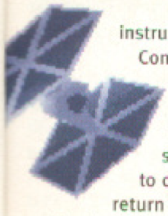
Loading the game

After you've installed the TIE Fighter demo onto your hard disk, log onto the directory where you installed the demo and type **TIEDEMO** to start.

If you want to configure individual soundcards, type **INSTALL** instead of **TIEDEMO** and follow the on-screen







instructions. Choose the 'Set Sound Board Configuration' option to alter the default settings then select 'Exit'.

You will be asked whether you want to read the Readme files but sadly there aren't any (because we had to chop them out) so press 'N' and 'N' to return to the DOS prompt. Oh, and doubly sadly the TIE Fighter demo doesn't support Roland soundcards. The full game does. The demo doesn't. Sorry Roland owners.

Flight controls

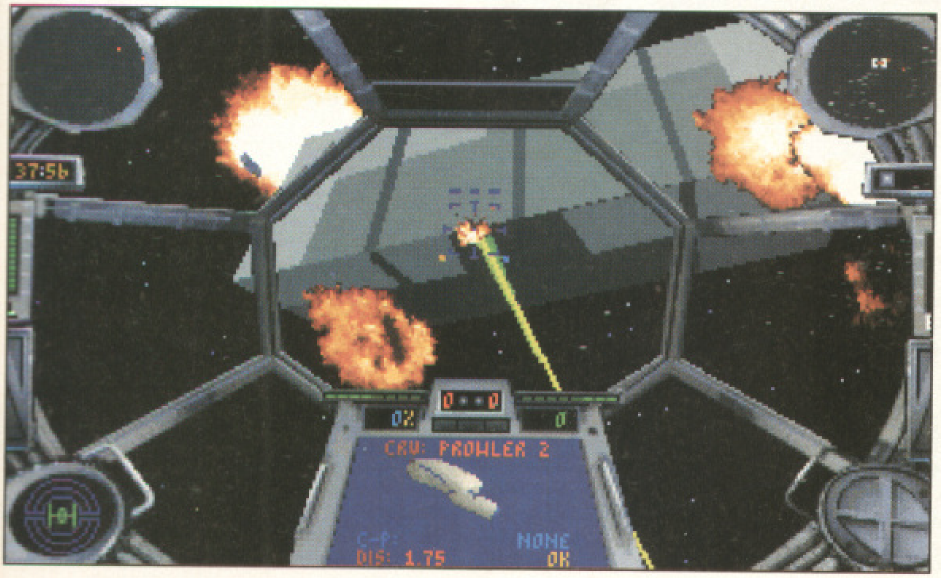
TIE Fighter needs a joystick to run properly and, apart from the basic up, down, left, right movements and the Fire button which obviously fires the lasers(!), the rest of the controls are as follows:

+	Increase speed
-	Decrease speed
[	1/3 speed
]	2/3 speed
BACKSPACE	Full speed
F3	Toggle internal/external view
1-9	Various views
F9	Redirect laser power
Q (ALT + E)	Eject
T	Cycle forwards through targets
R	Select nearest target
Y	Cycle backwards through targets
X	Link/unlink laser cannons
.	Full-screen view
CTRL	Tactical screen
ALT + M	Music on/off
ALT + D	Toggle detail settings
ALT + C	Calibrate joystick
SHIFT + A	Designate target

Press ESC during the combat sequence to quit out of the demo

So remember, it's here, it's exclusive to PC GAMES and best of all you can play it now. Yes, ú3.95 is a small price to pay for the opportunity to play a whole 40 minute mission from LucasArts' superb TIE Fighter, the eagerly awaited sequel to X-Wing. I know I've said all this already but I'm even more enthusiastic now and I'm saying it again.

It's a totally unbelievable offer. For ú3.95 not only do you get to play the superb TIE Fighter demo (there, I've said it again) but you get a 132-page magazine and two other top demos absolutely free. That's right, absolutely free. See below for further details and the chance to win £1,000.



Help me, Mr PC GAMES man, it's not working!!

To run the TIE Fighter demo you'll need at least 590K or more of free base memory and 2Mb of expanded or EMS memory (you can check both these by typing **MEM** at the DOS prompt). You really shouldn't have any problems getting it running.

● The TIE Fighter demo does not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software.

*** I'm afraid we were lying about the £1,000 bit. Sorry.**

MAKING A BOOT DISK

If you're having any problems running any of the games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and — voila — you have one boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the disk drive, reset your machine and finally try loading the game again. Don't take the boot disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.

Heimdall 2

Core Design

We gave you an exclusive preview of Heimdall 2 in WHAT PC GAMES last year and now we're back; bigger, better and sexier than ever before and with an exclusive Heimdall 2 demo to boot. Are we good to you or what?

Okay, I've calmed down a bit now. Deep breaths, in, out, in, out. Righty-ho, let's talk about Heimdall 2. In this demo of the fabulous Heimdall 2 you take control of the hero, Heimdall, a chap of the Viking persuasion (fur hat and furry boot fetishist, I'll bet) and your task is simply to guide him through the various locations, solving puzzles and battling baddies in order to find a secret artifact.

In fact, this artifact is so secret I can't even tell you what it is, but needless to say in the tradition of secret artifacts it will have an appropriately stupid name.

The quest for this appropriately silly artifact will push our Heimdall to the limit and so to reach the end of the demo you will have to make use of Heimdall's diplomatic skills (yes, this means you've got to talk to people) and his combat skills (okay, if they don't talk, beat them about the head a bit) to negotiate the physical and mental obstacles that block his path.

Remember, if you can tell us what lies beyond the magical shield in the King's chamber you could win a multimedia PC worth over £1,500. No, really. So play the game and then turn quickly to page 22 for more information.

Loading the game

After you've installed the Heimdall 2 demo onto your hard disk, log onto the directory where you installed the demo and type **H2DEMO** to start.

Heimdall requires — nay, demands — that you have a mouse installed and sadly the demo doesn't support any soundcards at all. It's literally got no sound. The full game does. The demo doesn't. So why not just stick ABBA's greatest hits in the CD, crank the music up loud and enjoy. Otherwise play it in silence.

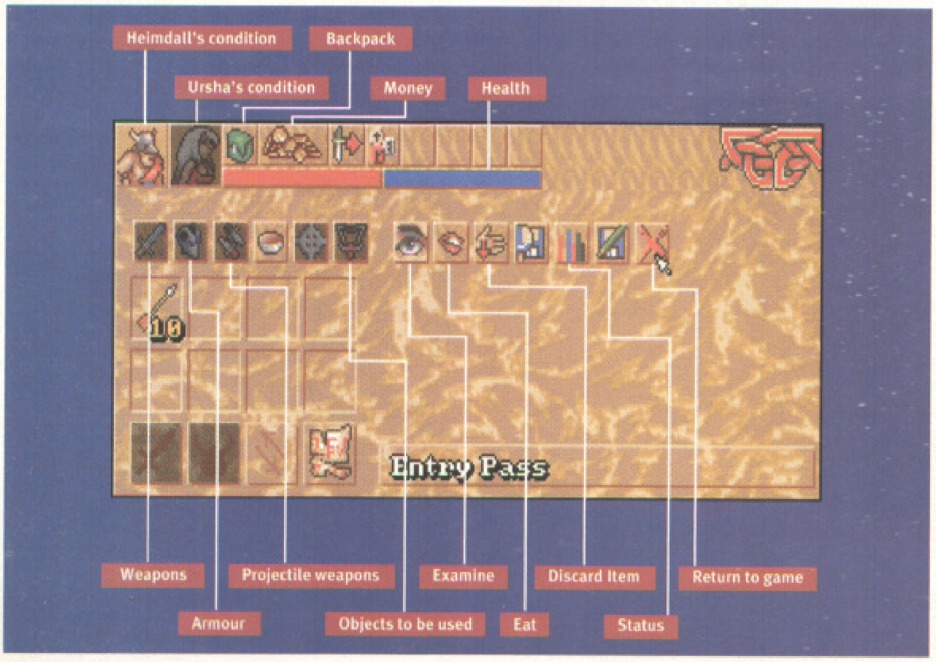
I keep seeing strange creatures walking through the corridors at night.

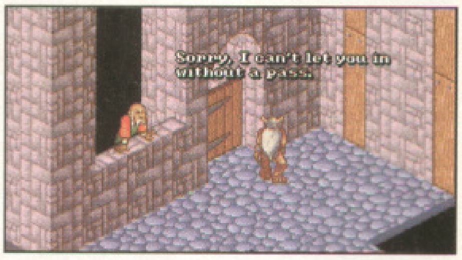
THE INVENTORY

Click over the bag icon to access the inventory which is split into six areas: weapons, armour, projectile weapons, miscellaneous items, holy items and charms. Four objects can be held at once and this is represented by the four boxes on the bottom left of the screen.

To return to the game click on the 'X' at the end of the row of icons. Pressing Fire uses the selected item. Note that arrows can be fired by placing the bow in the second box from the right and the arrows in the furthest box on the right.

Other items can be eaten, examined and so on by dragging them over the relevant icon. Remember this is only a demo and many of the features will not work. You'll just have to wait for the full game.





Sorry, I can't let you in without a pass.

To start the game, press ESC to end the intro sequences and press F1 to start a new game.

Game controls

Controlling Heimdall is simplicity itself. Using the mouse, click with the left button on the place you want Heimdall to move to and he'll move there.

To defend	Position cursor on baddie and double click left mouse button
To attack	Position cursor on baddie and double click right mouse button
To rotate	Use the cursor keys

The first problem you've got to overcome is how to get into the King's castle. Start by walking over the bread (you'll automatically pick it up) and then walk towards the big wooden door. The stony-faced guard will tell you that you need a pass, so click on the green backpack at the top of the screen and then click on the bowl icon. Click on the piece of torn paper (the pass) and move it to the space below with the bottle in it.

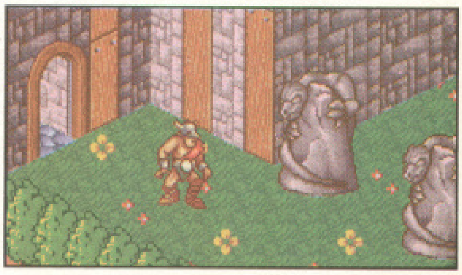
Now click on the red 'X' to quit the inventory and line yourself up in front of the guard. Click the left mouse button on the wall in front of him and Heimdall will give him the pass. The door will then open and you can get into the castle.

Press **ESC** at any time to quit out of the demo.

Help me, Mr PC GAMES man, it's not working!

To run the Heimdall 2 demo you'll need at least 590K or more of free base memory and 2Mb of expanded or EMS memory (you can check both these by typing **MEM** at the DOS prompt). If you have any problems try increasing the EMS memory to 4Mb. Of course, you need a mouse to play Heimdall 2.

- The Heimdall 2 demo does not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software.



The Settlers

BlueByte

"I love this game," said David Upchurch, "I can't say this enough. I love this game. I think it's really sweet."

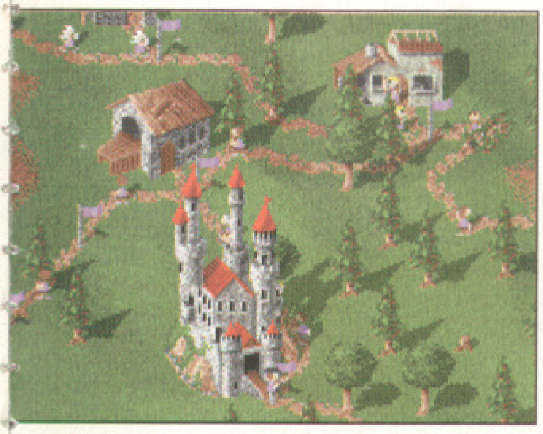
Pearls of wisdom indeed, my friends, because after TIE Fighter and Heimdall 2 you now have the chance to play a whole level of Bluebyte's God-game, The Settlers. A mix of Populous, Lemmings and Sim City, playing The Settlers can develop into an addiction.

Yes, you'll soon find that you begin to really, truly, deeply care as your little village grows into a town and its inhabitants wander around building new houses, chopping down trees and mining for gold. In fact, it's all very relaxing watching them at work and with this brilliant PC Games demo you can literally play for days and days. You just can't save your village at the end of it. Ah-ha, so that's the catch...

Loading the game

After you've installed The Settlers demo onto your hard disk, log onto the directory where you installed the demo and type **SEDDLERS** to start.

This will start the game with no sound. If you want to start the game with Soundblaster-compatible sound type **SB**; for Soundblaster Pro support type **SBP**; Pro Audio Spectrum users should type **PAS** and Adlib Gold owners **ALGOLD**.



The Settlers needs a mouse installed and for more information on what to do and how to play, there is a **README** file in the SETTLERS directory. To view this file either type in **TYPE README.TX8 IMORE** or using DOS EDIT type in **EDIT README.TX8**.

How to play

The best way to play The Settlers is just to have a good, old-fashioned fiddle around and see what happens. When the intro screen appears click your mouse button and then click on the START box on the subsequent screen.

When the gameworld appears the first thing you should do is choose a suitable location for your castle. Scroll around the map by holding the right mouse button down and moving the mouse in the direction you want to go. A good starting location should have a plentiful supply of rocks and trees nearby and be on a fairly level piece of land.

When you've built your fairytale castle you'll notice that a boundary has been erected. This marks out the borders of your land and can only be expanded if you deploy knights near the border.

The first building you should build is a woodcutters hut, so select a sit, click on the build icon at the bottom of the screen and choose your building to plonk it on the map like you did for the castle. To start the construction process you need to connect the hut to the castle so click on the flag near the hut, click on the build icon again and the site will now be surrounded by small boxes with gradient symbols. To construct a path simply click on one of the boxes. Once connected, build a stone mason's hut and a saw mill.

The Settlers is far too complicated to detail everything here and if you want to know how to build a successful and thriving village, sneak a look at the computer-controlled villages.

So off you go. Build a village you can be proud of and I'll bet you spend hours watching your little villagers moving about. I know I do...

(left) The main icons are , from left to right: Build house/road, Burn down/dig up road, Map, Status and Options. Experiment with them to see what they each do.

The fine print bit..

The PC Games disks are rigorously checked for viruses, but coverdisks are used at the reader's own risk. PC Games can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by using the coverdisks.
PC Games and it's retailers are not liable for any unnotified changes to the contents of the coverdisks which may occur.

My disks don't work!

Due to the massively huge number of disks that are duplicated, the occasional one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

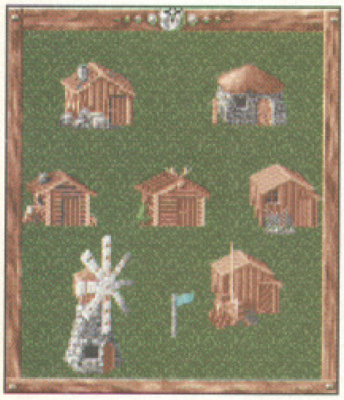
PC GAMES Bodged Disks,
Diskxpress,
Unit 3,
Old Coalyard Farm
Northleach
Gloucestershire GL54 3EP

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on (0451) 860770. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

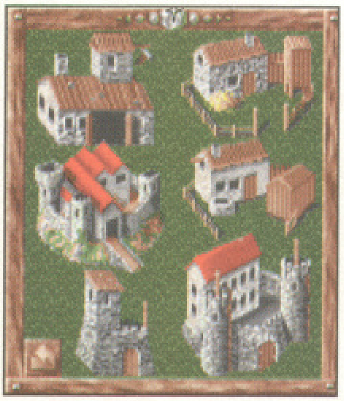
Help me, Mr PC GAMES man, it's not working!

To run The Settlers demo you'll need at least 590K or more of free base memory and 4Mb of expanded or EMS memory (you can check both these by typing **MEM** at the dos prompt). Of course, remember you need a mouse to play The Settlers.

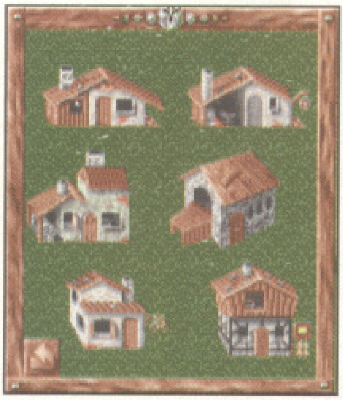
- The Settlers demo does not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software. Sorry about that...



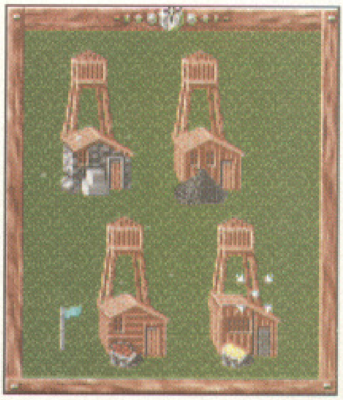
(From left to right) Primary buildings include: The Stone Mason, The Knight's Hut, The Woodcutter, The Forester, The Fisherman, The Miller and The Boat Builder.



(From left to right) The Locksmith, The Wheat Farmer, the Knight's Keep, Leon the Pig Farmer, The Watch Tower and an even bigger Knight's Keep with big towers.



(From left to right) Secondary buildings include: The Butcher, The Blacksmith's Forge, The Iron Foundry, The Sawmill, The Bakery and The Gold Foundry.

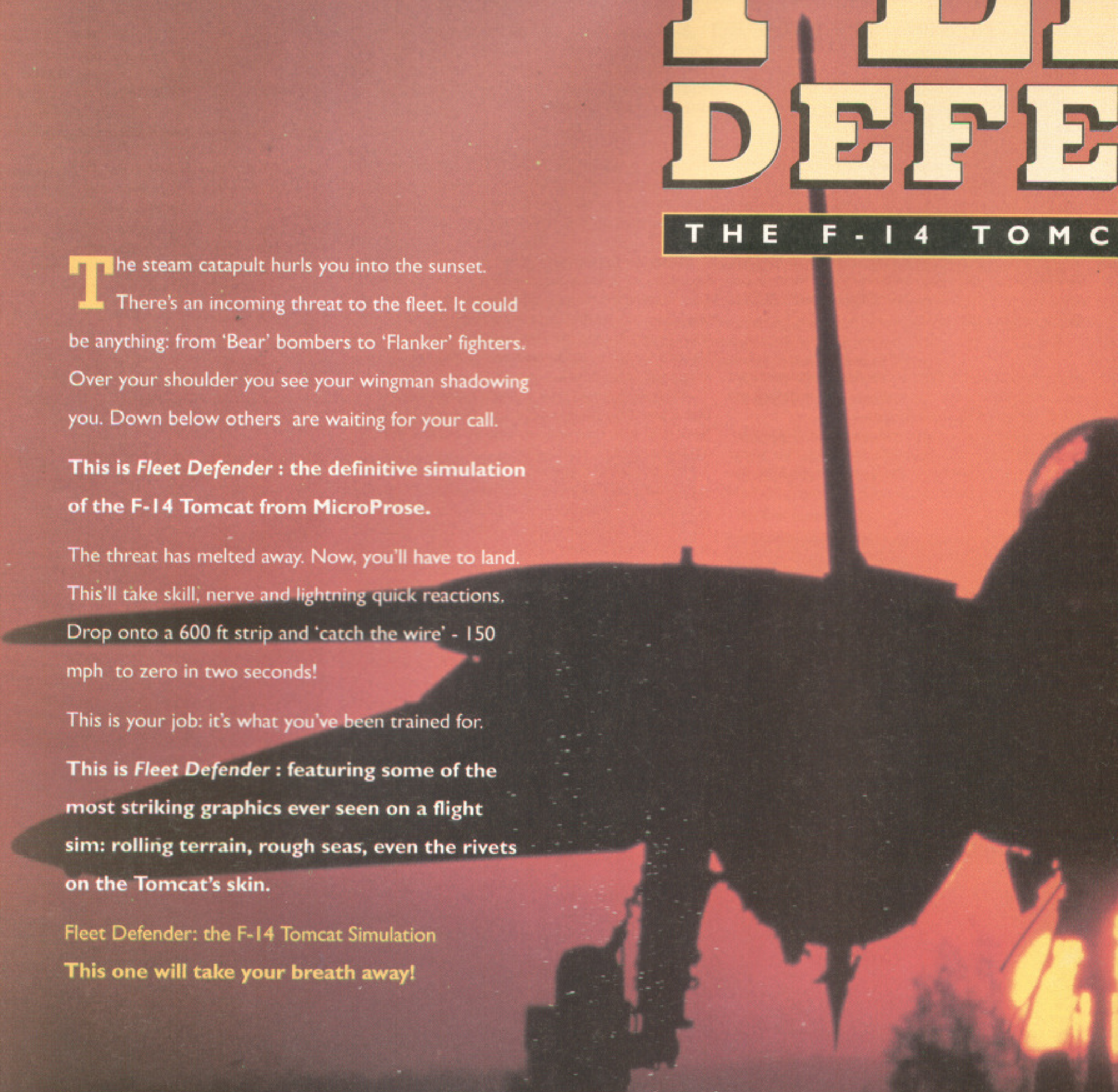


(From left to right) There are several different types of mine in Settlers and they include: Iron Ore, Coal, Gems and Gold pits. They can only be built on brown land.

FLY THE US NA

FL
DEFE

THE F-14 TOMC



The steam catapult hurls you into the sunset. There's an incoming threat to the fleet. It could be anything: from 'Bear' bombers to 'Flanker' fighters. Over your shoulder you see your wingman shadowing you. Down below others are waiting for your call.

This is *Fleet Defender* : the definitive simulation of the F-14 Tomcat from MicroProse.

The threat has melted away. Now, you'll have to land. This'll take skill, nerve and lightning quick reactions. Drop onto a 600 ft strip and 'catch the wire' - 150 mph to zero in two seconds!

This is your job: it's what you've been trained for.

This is *Fleet Defender* : featuring some of the most striking graphics ever seen on a flight sim: rolling terrain, rough seas, even the rivets on the Tomcat's skin.

Fleet Defender: the F-14 Tomcat Simulation

This one will take your breath away!

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news

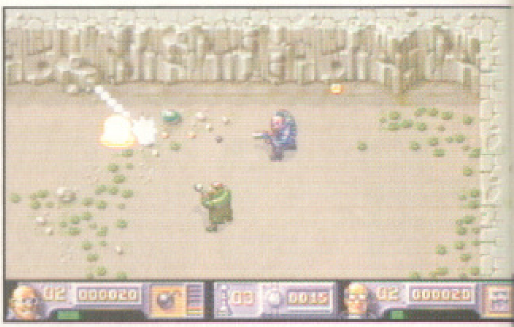
Gadgets, **Gongs and Games *Galore!***

Spring. And a young games journalist's thoughts turn not only to fancy, but to the European games industry's yearly product showcase, the European Computer Trade Show, or ECTS to its chums, which was held on the 10-12th April.

Over 120 different hardware and software companies showed off their wares, all in all totalling thousands of different products, from humble novelty breast-shaped mouse mats (more on that elsewhere!) to £10,000 game development systems. Yes indeed, the ECTS is becoming so big that it will soon be able to comfortably accommodate at least one of the lesser known Soviet republics.

There was absolutely no shortage of PC product either. In fact, there were more PC games, gadgets and gizmos than ever before. Over 40 companies had something to offer for perusal; proof, if proof were ever needed, that the PC is on the up and up.

Over the next few — alright, then, nine — pages we take a look at just some of the gaming goodies that were on show and will be coming soon to a PC near you...



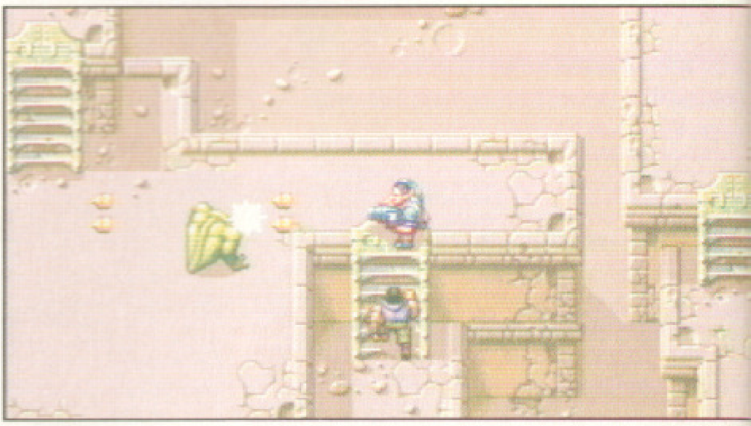
Let there be chaos!

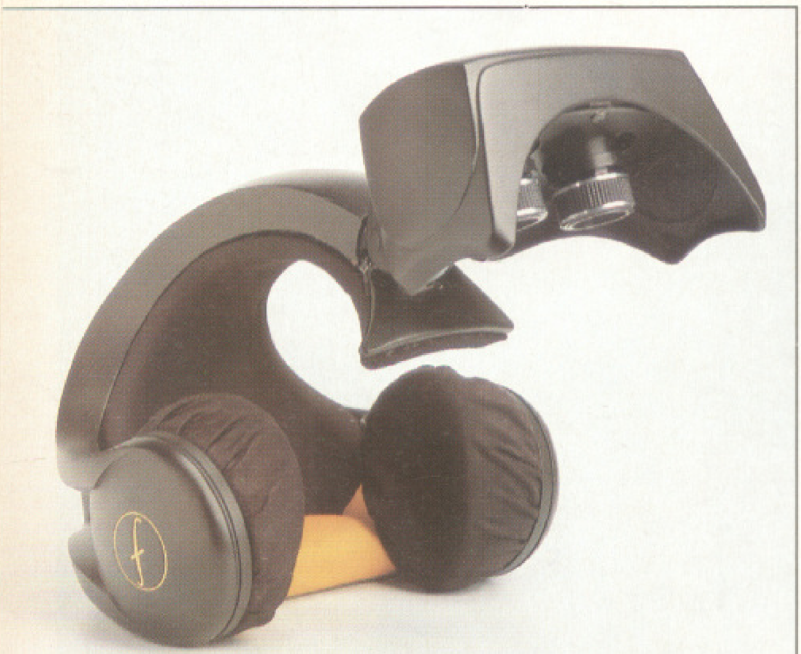
"The PC version is drawn in a full 256-colour palette, allowing characters, monsters, backgrounds, etc, to all have separate, independent colours. This means that, more than any other version, the PC version has a rich colourful appearance."

Thus spake Simon Knight, co-designer of Renegade's The Chaos Engine, a thinking man's shoot-'em-up in the Gauntlet mould, which finally hits the PC this month after conquering all on other computer and console formats. The game is just about complete and is currently being tweaked and tidied up before release.

"To get Chaos Engine to run at a speed which we find acceptable on slower machines can be extremely challenging and time consuming, but we spend a lot of time ensuring that the game is every bit as well presented and as much fun on the lowest machine we support as it is on the fastest," added Knight.

Hooray for that, then. Weather and programming difficulties permitting, you can expect a full review in the next issue.





Virtual Reality ***really is here***

Apart from Ocean's stunning Inferno, the stand that drew the biggest crowd at the ECTS show was Crystal Vision's. The budget games retailers were overwhelmed by awe-struck visitors, none of them desperately wanting to buy a cheap copy of Cruise For A Corpse but all clamouring to have a bash at Virtual Reality Doom running on the Forte Technologies VR headset.

Now VR isn't new — I'm sure we've all sat in a smoke-filled arcade and put £2 into a Virtuality machine — but the picture quality is often blurred, the tracking is slow and if you wanted to actually buy one it would cost you a cool £12,000.

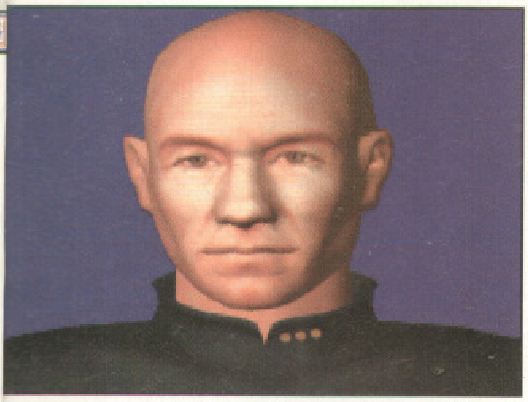
But with the new VFX1 system, Forte have produced a low-cost VR headset that you can use with your 486 PC. Simply slot in the secret Forte expansion card, plug in the headset, connect the CyberBat controller and you can enter the exciting world of Virtual Reality. All this for a mere £650. It's unbelievable.

The VFX1 opens up a whole new set of possibilities for PC gaming. Not only did it have Doom up and running (a full motion tracking version, no less) but PC GAMES was also shown a 3D stereoscopic version of Bullfrog's forthcoming Magic Carpet and promised by Richard Garriott that Origin will be converting it's acclaimed Ultima Underworld series for use with the headset.

As well as Origin, many other companies, including Bethesda, Electronic Arts, Id Software, Virgin, LucasArts, Accolade and DID, have all expressed a serious interest in developing for the VFX1. Imagine Virtual TFX. Or Virtual Strike Commander. And how about Virtual X-Wing? It's not too far away...

Our sister mag PC REVIEW is currently running a huge, seven page feature on the VFX1 in the May issue. How do they do it?

Microprose's *Next Generation!*



After some recent boardroom shenanigans which left the firm in something of a state of flux for a while, MicroProse is finally getting back to doing what it does best — namely, producing top quality strategies and simulations.

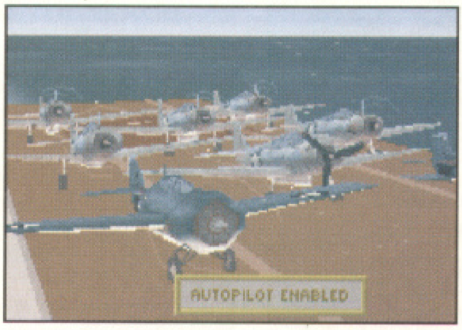
This month the firm releases 1942: Pacific Air War which allows you to recreate the best of those limb-splitting air and sea battles fought in the South Pacific during World War 2.

Graphics and backgrounds are all texture mapped, planes are Gouraud shaded and the ships are in full 3D. Missions can also be saved and replayed using different camera angles. Featured missions include the battles of Coral Sea, Eastern Solomons, Santa Cruz, Philippine Sea and, of course, the good ol' Battle of Midway.

Carrying on with the World War II obsession, the firm also has Across The Rhine, a tank simulation like the hugely successful M1 Tank Platoon but with texture mapping and fully Gouraud shaded 3D landscapes and objects.

Spookily coinciding with the 50th anniversaire of the D-Day landings in June, the game starts at the Normandy beach landings and continues right up until the end of the war. There's the option of representing the US Army or the (boo! hiss!) German Wehrmacht, if you're into that sort of thing.

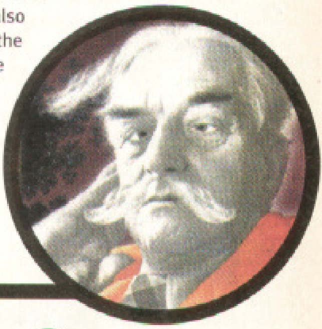
Perhaps most eagerly-awaited is Star Trek: The Next Generation, which the firm bill as a 'CD-ROM spectacular', so there's confidence for you.



The PC 'episode' is actually called The Final Unity (there are several different episodes for different formats) and you get to control all of the seven main characters in the series — Picard, Ryker, Dr Crusher, Wolf, Laforge, Data or Councillor Troi.

Apaprently, the plot involves the search for a missing scroll containing certain information which can lead to a more vital discovery (there's vague for you). There are also plenty of sub-plots within the game that veer off from the main storyline so there's more than enough here to keep you occupied.

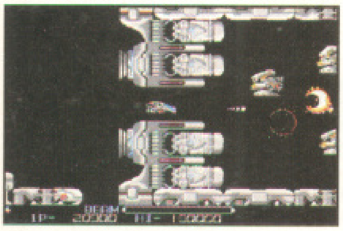
Star Trek:TNG (that's what the REAL fans call it — or so we're told) is all set for release around about August.



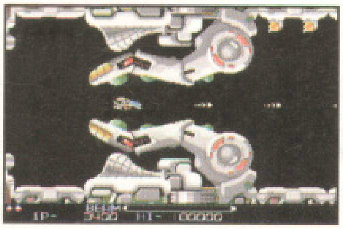
Sir Harvey Barrington presents: Classic Moments In Games

Well met, lovers of fine prose. Once again the illiterate buffoons who 'run' this squalid little organ have had the sense to call upon me, Sir Harvey Barrington, the famed games-as-art critic, to add a veneer of quality to their otherwise tawdry proceedings.

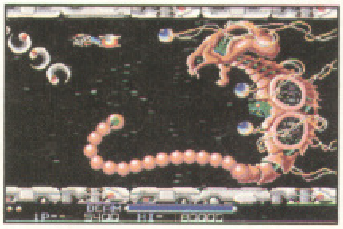
Every month I'll be presenting and commenting on classic moments in games both old and new. And the first recipient of this mighty honour is the seminal arcade shoot-'em-up R-Type, focussing on the player's encounter with the game's first end-of-level guardian...



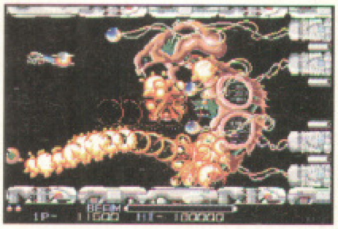
R-Type follows in the classic traditions of Ancient Greek literature, pitting a lone hero (here the brave pilot of a horribly beweaponed R-9 space vehicle) against a legion of foes (the implacable alien minions of the Bydo Empire)...



Having vanquished scores of vile xenomorphic enemies, the player's ship enters an vacant section of tunnel. This illusion of peace and calm is subverted, however, by the game's pulsing musical score, giving dramatic warning of terrors to come....



The player's nemesis appears, a nightmarish vision owing an obvious graphical debt to the works of famed Swiss artist H. R. Giger, of Alien fame. Surely the miniscule and relatively feeble R-9 ship cannot hope to defeat such a mighty and implacable being...?



In a parallel with the Biblical story of David and Goliath, the player (i.e. David) discovers that the end-of-level Guardian (i.e. Goliath) has a supremely vulnerable weak spot, in this case the alien's stomach. Once this failing is exploited, the player's quest continues...

- I now throw the floor open to you, the readers. Are there are Classic Moments In Games you'd like to see dissected and analysed by my mighty intellect? If so, write in to me at the usual PC GAMES address — if you make a particularly worthy nomination, you could win yourself a free software prize.

Greetings, mere humans, and a big "Hiya!" to any other sentient life-forms reading this. I, as you may already know, am Imp, the Devil's officially appointed advocate — accept no substitutes. This month I've got but one thing to say to you, and that's...

"SEX in big letters"

Sex. Love it or, er, love it, you can't ignore it — it's an integral and rather important part of life, and without it you wouldn't be here (although I would because I was spawned from the pits of Hell, a far less messy albeit much more painful process than the one you humans have to endure). So why isn't there more of it in the games we play?

"Oh but we have," you say. "What about the Leisure Suit Larry games, for example?" Yeah, fair enough, but I'm not talking about sex treated as an act to be sniggered about behind the bike sheds at school, I'm talking about sex treated the same way it is in art. Think about it — almost every classic work of literature, cinema, poetry or whatever features sex as part of its narrative structure in some form or other.

Now obviously, I'm not saying that Lemmings, for example, ranks alongside Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, or that Rebel Assault will change the way you perceive the world as Kafka's Metamorphosis does, but it seems to me that if games are ever to have that kind of impact on people's lives then sex is just one of the things they'll have to address in a mature and responsible way.

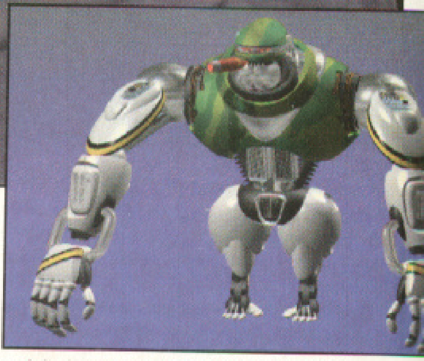
After all, nearly every software company claims to be aiming towards the creation of an 'Interactive Movie', the hope being that such games will have appeal to a mass, adult market. Trouble is, for all these games' texture-mapped graphic realism and 3D sound, the plots still seem to be stuck in the fantasy world of a pre-pubescent science fiction reader.

Now let's get a couple of things clear. For one, I'm not suggesting that PC games become pornographic slideshows — that's sex as titillation, not art. And for another, I'm not suggesting that these 'adult' games be readily available to school kids — obviously some form of strictly enforced ratings system would have to be applied to restrict access to them.

I guess the point I'm trying to make is that I want the opportunity to play games that reflect the thought processes of a mature adult being. And being a mature adult, some of those thought processes concern sex.

But then, I suppose they would — I've always been a horny little devil...

● **Do you agree or diagree with Imp's rantings? Why not write in with your views to: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Imp's opinions are his own and in no way reflect those of PC**



On the rise

If robots are your thing then you'll love Mirage's latest, the much-hyped (surely 'acclaimed'? - Ed.) Rise Of The Robots, of which there will be no less than three PC versions.

You see, the game will come on CD-ROM and two disk versions — one for SVGA, spread across a staggering 14 disks (thank God for CD, eh?) and a normal VGA version which is only (only?) across ten disks.

Rise of the Robots is a stunning beat-'em-up in which you control a half-human/half-robot cyborg on mission to destroy six other robots which have taken over a manufacturing plant.

Already the game is regarded by many as being Street Fighter 2's better-looking cousin, mainly due to its use of ray-traced graphics throughout — the first beat-'em-up to do this.

The collection of rather tough-looking android types in the game include Loader, which is a sort of big yellow lifting machine with a useful right hand (on account of it's about the same length as its body with a sharp pointed thing on the end).

Then there's Builder, a sort of electronic gorilla, none too bright, but you probably wouldn't knock his pint over. Crusher, erm... crushes things with his two, erm... crushers.

Exterminator doesn't look very nice at all and his nails really could do with a trim, but no-one's likely to tell him that. Lastly, there's The Sentry who is actually able to attack you according to whatever your own style is. Clever git.

Rise of the Robots will be available around September.

'Tek Wars!

Gametek is one of the many software houses that sees PC — and CD-ROM in particular — as being the medium that it leads with from now on. The firm is putting this policy into practice with Star Crusader on CD. It's from the same development team behind MicroProse's Bloodnet, and the game features digitised speech and CD quality soundtrack.

In addition there's Quarantine, which won't be out until October, but what we can tell you is that it's a race game that utilises a 3D game engine not too dissimilar to Wolfenstein's.

Gametek's big hope for the summer is The Beverly Hillbillies, which was once a highly successful, though somewhat gag-free, 50's sitcom about a bunch of... well... hillbillies that come into some money and move into the ultra-posh Beverly Hills district of LA (with hilarious culture-clashing consequences) and is now a 'star'-studded movie.

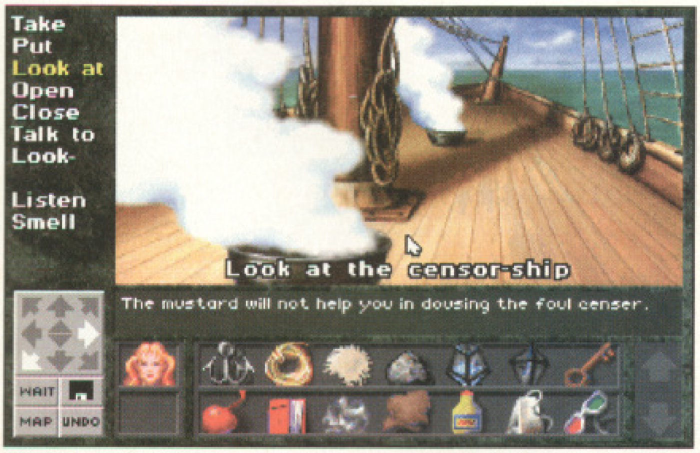
In the game you play Jed, the hillbilly dad. Having moved from the crappy ol' shack in the woods to Beverly Hills, you've only just started unpacking the crates when granny is kidnapped. You have to rescue her using home-made snake oil and assorted secret tonics.

The game comes out in July and the really good news is that the firm is hoping to keep the price down to around £20. Isn't that good of them?

Mindscape **is the lore!**

Expect big things from Mindscape/The Software Toolworks in the near future. Thanks to an extra bit of financial muscle from a firm called Pearsons, which has its finger in just about every pie you can think of, the firm looks certain to invest big money in its CD projects. You know those novelty-sized cheques they give pools winners? Yep, that's it — even bigger than that.

Meanwhile, Cryo, the Paris-based development team responsible for the excellent MegaRace, has come up with Dragon Lore: The Legend Begins (originally entitled Dragon Tales), a fully-rendered 3D adventure which will be out on CD on the Toolwork label in June.



Look at the censor-ship

The mustard will not help you in dousing the foul censer.

Blimey — It's Xanth CD!

For those of you that have heard of the Xanth series of fantasy novels written by Piers Anthony it's time to get excited, and for those that haven't, well, keep reading, we'll excite you later on.

Yes, Xanth fans everywhere will be cock-a-hoop to learn that Accolade are set to release their RPG/adventure Companions Of Xanth later this month on CD-ROM for £39.99, complete with a special bonus — a copy of Demons Don't Dream, the most recent novel by Piers Anthony.

The game itself features the digitised voices of over 30 — count 'em, 30 — actors and actresses, and various ogres, demons and centaurs too, no doubt. Up for grabs is the very existence of magic itself and in the red corner there's the evil Com-Pewter (geddit?), ably assisted by Humphrey (doesn't sound very tough, does he?). Expect a review next issue.

LET'S GET DIGITAL!

Digital Integration, known as something of a flight sim specialist, rather surprisingly only had one such title on offer on its stand, namely an add-on disk for Tornado called Operation Desert Storm (yawn) and, get this, it's (somewhat ironically) endorsed by the two blokes who got shot down over Iraq.

Other than that, what there was a lot of on the DI stand was American football shirts, not because the firm has started taking in laundry, but because it has released the NFL-endorsed Pro League Football which features 198 offensive and defensive plays and real NFL players and teams.

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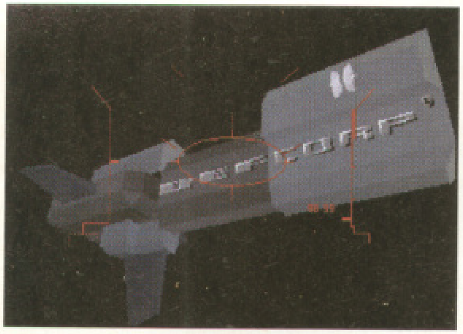
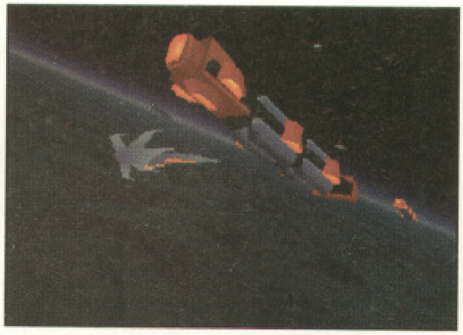
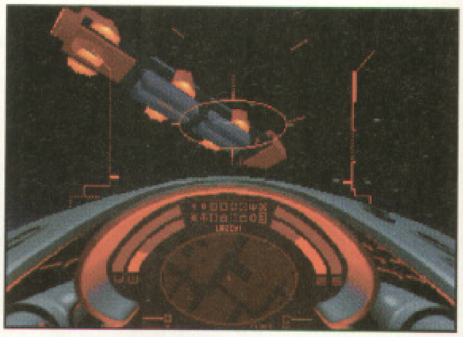
PC GAMES MAY 94







Flame **on!**

Drive My Rocket Up Uranus. No takers? Well, actually, it wasn't a request at all it's a song by goth rockers Alien Sex Fiend. What has this got to do with anything? Well, Ocean thinks it's got a bit of a scoop because the band has provided the soundtrack for Inferno, which as you probably know, is due to be released on disk and CD in September.

Developed by DID, the firm behind TFX, the game has been structured specifically with CD-ROM as the lead format. There are over 700 missions to fly in the space sim and three ways to play it. The 'Evolutionary' option gives you the chance to play your own game, the 'Director's cut' provides you with the most graphically-stunning route, whilst the 'Arcade' choice means you can restart missions as soon as you get used to the demands of the game.

It comes packaged with a graphic novel by Judge Dredd artist Sean Philips and there's also a special limited edition version in embossed metal packaging available on the first day of release. Watch out for this one, it's going to be, as we say at PC GAMES, a belter.

Full-motion **Football!**

Video Sports Football CD, coming soon on the Sports Accolade label, promises to be a real treat for fans of American Football, as it'll feature full-motion video footage shot especially for the game.

Al Michaels, a man who posesses the job description 'legendary sportscaster', provides play-by-play commentary just as he has done on Hardball III, Brett Hull Hockey and Unnecessary Roughness.

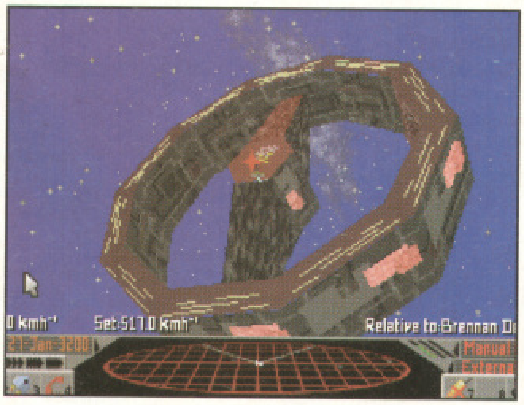
Still on the sports theme, a PC version of the basketball game Barkley: Shut Up And Jam, which is already a hit on certain lesser formats, has been pencilled in for release near the end of the year.

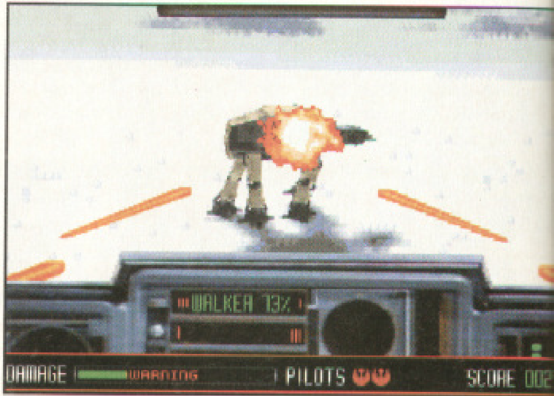
Clever...

Ocean's Central Intelligence is yet another game to lead on CD-ROM. It's a strategy game that puts you on a secret mission to topple a South American government by using one of three methods — propaganda, military action or by political means. It'll be out in June.

CAST IRON

Iron Angel, yet another forthcoming Ocean release, is being described as a cross between Inferno and TFX. All you have to do is prevent a nuclear holocaust by using the most sophisticated aircraft and weapons around. There's no specific release date yet, but it's expected to arrive before the end of the summer.





Going for a **gong!**

During every ECTS there's a prestigious awards ceremony where the industry gets the chance to say "well done" and pat its own back. This year, the awards were held at the Regent Hotel and were presented by Radio One DJ Mark Goodier. Also present was former Gamesmaster frontman Dominic Diamond and, for no discernible reason, Mike Edwards from Jesus Jones.

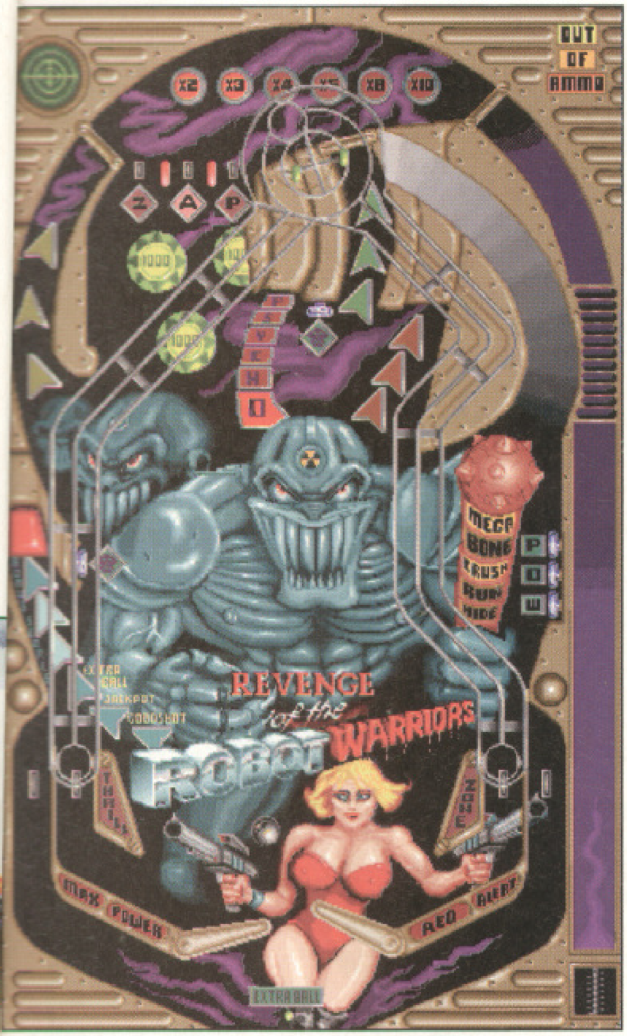
PC games swept the board, winning ten of the sixteen categories. Overall Game Of The Year was Id Software's Shareware sensation Doom, which also grabbed the accolade for Computer Game Of The Year. Id achieved what Manchester United couldn't by completing a neat treble with the Game Innovation award as well.

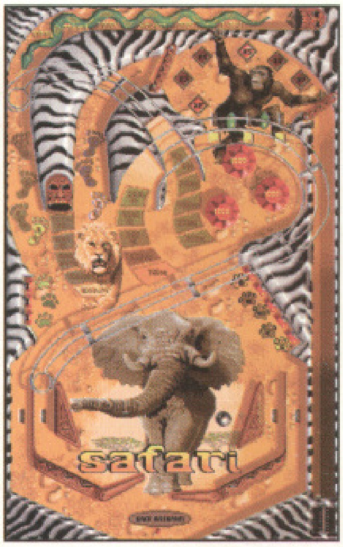
LucasArts also did the treble, mainly thanks to its series of Star Wars-based shoot-'em-ups. Rebel Assault beat off some stiff competition to win CD Game Of The Year, whilst X-Wing was voted Japanese Game Of The Year. The biggest feather in the cap for LucasArts however, had to be the title Developer Of The Year. Well done.

Electronic Arts' excellent Syndicate picked up a brace, winning Most Original Game and German Game Of The Year, while our chums in Scandanavia voted for Maxis' Sim City 2000 as their Game Of The Year.

The BBC Live and Kicking Award, which, if it isn't self-explanatory enough, is voted for by the viewers of the Saturday morning kids' show, was scooped by Elite 2 from Gametek. Had there also been an award for Longest Time Spent Producing A Sequel it would no doubt have gone to Elite 2 as well.

Finally (insert fanfare here) we come to the one they all want to win — Software House Of The Year. And the winner was (drum roll here) Virgin Interactive Entertainment, as Virgin Games is now rather grandiosely known as. So that now means that all VIE games are now officially excellent and should be purchased as a matter of course.

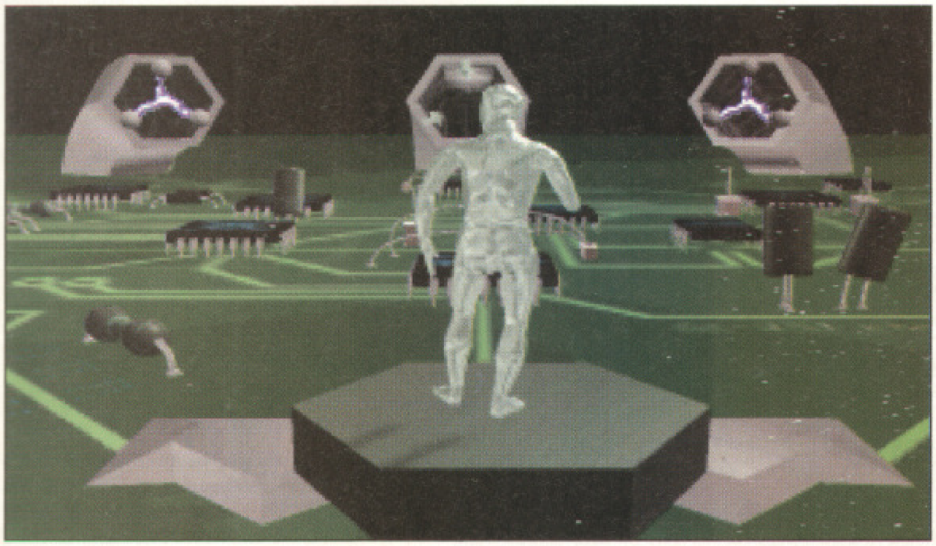




Pinball **Wizardry!**

Think of 21st Century and you think of Pinball Dreams, THE definitive Pinball simulation right? No surprise to find that this particular nugget has not run its full course yet.

Pinball Dreams II — an add-on disk for the original with four new tables on it — is released this month at the give-away price of £19.99, whilst a CD-ROM version called Pinball Dreams Deluxe, featuring all the tables from both PD I and II, is out in June.



It's **Cyberwar!**

SCI (formerly the Sales Curve and also known as Storm) had only one release to speak of on PC - Cyberwar, a kind of follow up to The Lawnmower Man which the firm has already released on CD-ROM. Like the original, it features footage from the film along with ray-traced 3D graphics and, such is the overwhelming... bigness of the whole thing, it comes on not one, not two, but three CDs, and will only work on double-speed drives. So there. Oh, and it's due for release in October. More news soon...

TRUE STORIES

No.1 The *Strange* Case Of The Folded Floppy

There was this friend of mine, right, worked in a computer shop. It was first thing on a Monday morning, and he'd only just opened up the shop for business when this bloke rushes in, looking really angry, waving a game box in his hand.

"I bought this game from this very establishment on Saturday," he roared, throwing the box onto the counter, "And I'm afraid to say that the disks don't work."

"Oh dear," replied my mate.

"'Oh dear' indeed," the man continued, growing redder. "In fact, not only do the disks not work, but they've broken my disk drive too. The drive was fine before I started to install this game, and now it just makes a grinding sound and refuses to work."

My mate tried to calm him down, explaining that the chances of a floppy disk physically breaking a disk drive were a billion to one, but this bloke was having none of it.

It was only when my mate opened the customer's box and saw the mangled mess inside that the awful truth began to dawn.

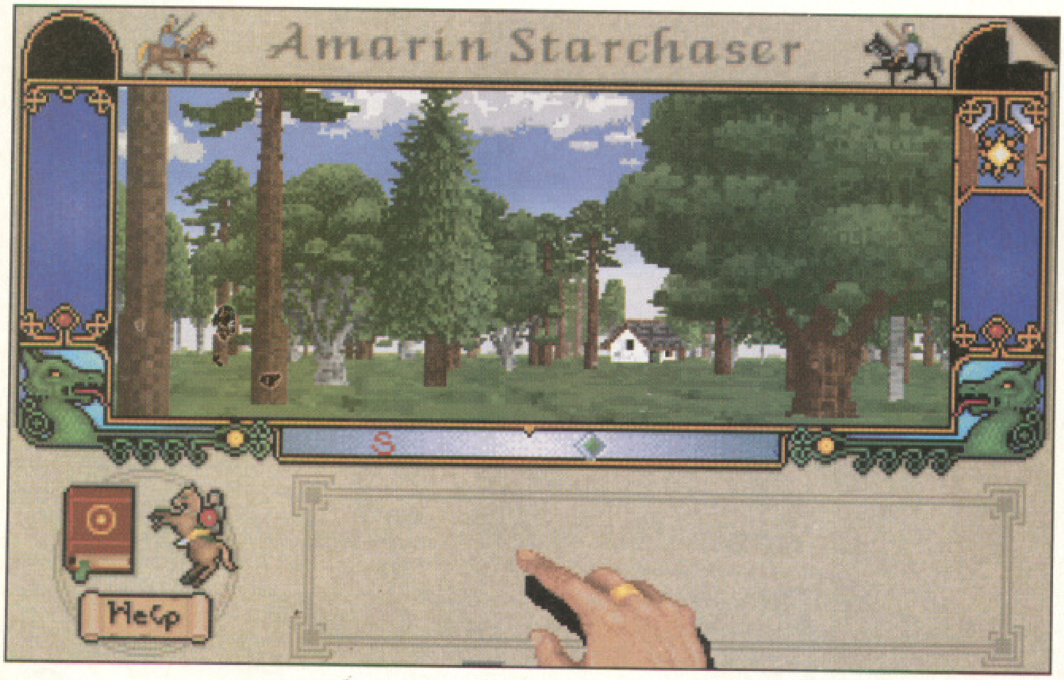
"Er," interrupted my mate, "How big — roughly — would you say you drive slot is?"

"I don't know — this PC thing is all new to me," blustered the man. "About three inches, I'd guess..."

"But these disks are for a five-and-a-quarter inch drive," said my friend.

"I know — I had to fold them in half several times until they finally fitted, and even then it was a bit of a squeeze..."

● **Do you think this True Story is really** true or just something we made up after a night in the pub? Send us your considered verdict to: True Stories, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. The first person to write in with the correct judgement will win a FREE piece of software.



Midnight **Lovers**

Those old enough to remember will recall that the original Lords Of Midnight was generally accepted to be pretty darn good when it was released about.. ooh... seven years ago.

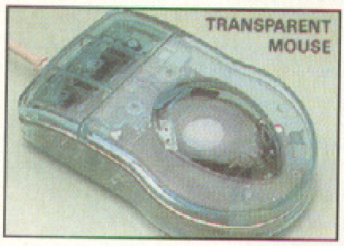
Well, a sequel has finally arrived, and is being developed by Mike Singleton, creator of the original, and published by Domark. Subtitled The Citadel, Lords Of Midnight is a completely new strategy/adventure game featuring 3D texture-mapped landscapes and full real-time animation. The firm plans to release a series of data disks to add to the game at a later date.

There will be a review next issue, but if you can't wait that long to have a look at it then you may like to know that the June edition of PC REVIEW, our sister mag, will feature a fully-playable demo of it.

ROM AT THE STOP!

One Stop Software is mostly known for coming up with all sorts of home office packs and all that sort of stuff, but it did have a small selection of top-value CD-ROM games packs on the Lasersoft label. They sell for about £50 and are worth a look.

There's Fly/Drive Spectacular which contains Falcon, Vettei, Flight Of The Intruder and Stunt Driver, while the Links Collectors CD has tons of different golf courses on it and the Lasersoft Top Tracks pack includes Links, Welltris and Flight Of The Intruder (again).


TRANSPARENT MOUSE

That's **brilliant!**

The Data Business has put a new slant on the boring old rubber mousemat by injecting a bit of comedy into the proceedings. Not only is there the usual array of coloured and patterned mats (signs of the zodiac, London Underground map, etc) but now we have them in novelty shapes too.

Yes, there's one of a car, one of a cartoon pig and one of an apple with a worm coming out of it, but the one that sticks out the most is the pair of breasts in a bra for the real sad individuals out there.

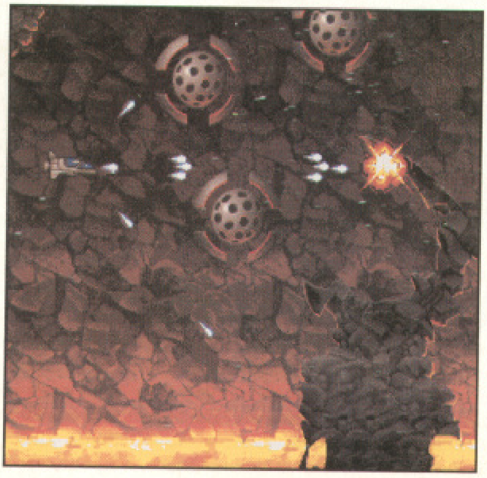
Meanwhile, Power Play is pushing back the barriers of technology with its new mouse. It does all the things a normal mouse does but — and here's the clever bit — it's TRANSPARENT! What will they think of next?

VIVID IMAGE GO FRENCH!

Mev Dinc. Now there's a name to conjure with. Well, the Mevmeister and his Vivid Image development team have now tied their colours to the mast of French publisher UbiSoft.

VI will be developing a number of as yet unannounced projects for the firm over the next two to three years. In case you don't recognise the handle, Dinc is the creative wunderkind behind Hammerfist, Time Machine, First Samurai and, of course, Second Samurai.

Team 17's new project



Big news from Team 17 is the imminent (well, if you can call August 'imminent') release of Project-X. This horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up went down a storm on Amiga, and promises to go down equally well on PC. There will be more news next time...

Meanwhile, the long-awaited Alien Breed II will remain just that — long-awaited — until December at least, when there'll be more of the same and maybe a little bit more to boot.

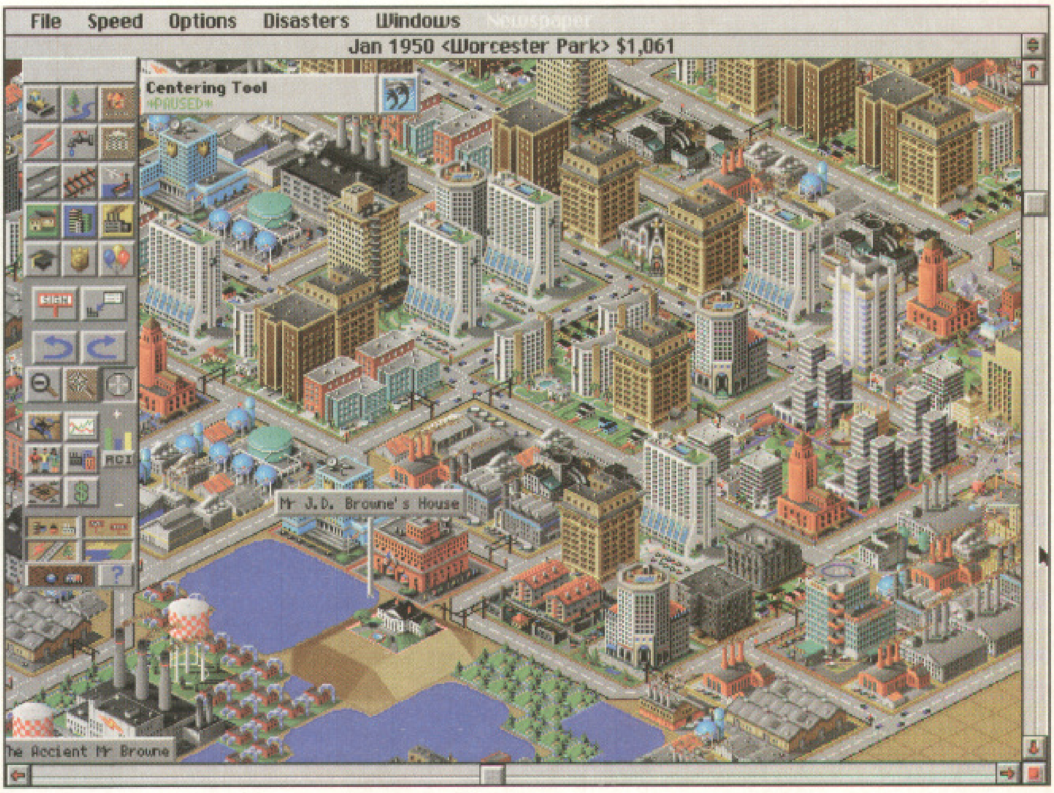
Then there's Arcade Sports which, as its (working) title suggests, is a sports game — the first from Team 17. But — and here's the catch — it's a ten-pin bowling simulator! Still, different strokes for different folks, eh?

Cred Zepplin!

Another small but perfectly formed publisher, Zeppelin is increasingly turning its attention towards PC titles. And there are three lined up for release this month, in fact.

Alex Dampier Ice Hockey — yes, that's ALEX DAMPIER Ice Hockey, THE Alex Dampier, Great Britain Ice Hockey Coach and Canadian international player — features options just too numerous to mention, so I won't. But all angles have been covered from target practice to time wasting on/off. ALEX DAMPIER! Can you believe it? He didn't come cheap either, I bet.

Three Dimensional Pool brings a 'whole new perspective to computer pool' because you have to play it naked. HA! You were going for it for a second there, admit it. No, actually 3D Pool is a standard pool sim with slow-mo replay, multiple camera angles and league or knockout tournament options. What more could you ask for?



CD **Sim City**

The CD-ROM version of Maxis' excellent Sim City 2000 is due in September with all the features of the original disk version, plus real-time video footage of your Sim-citizens, disasters and advisors. Expect to shell out around £45 for it.

In addition, there's Volume 1 of the Sim City add-on scenarios — Great Disasters. The idea is that you can take part in some of the worst disasters of recent times. It includes such unforgettable moments as the Malibu bushfires from last November and the Loma Pietra earthquake of October 1989 which threatened to shake San Francisco to rubble.

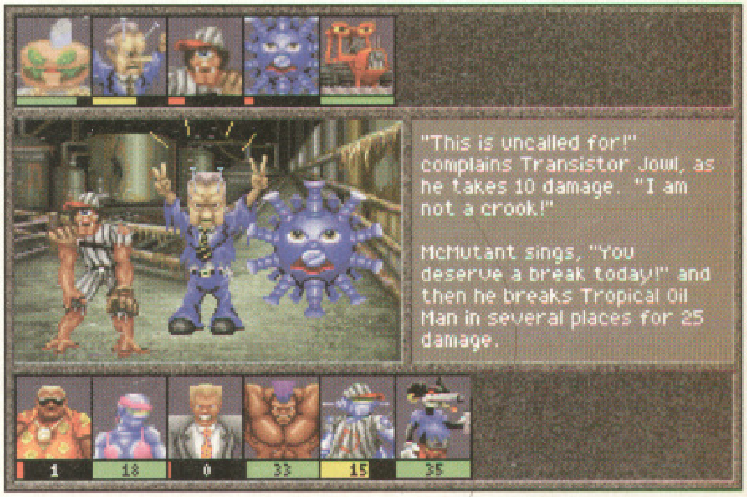
There's a few imaginary disasters as well: Chicago 1999 — industrial pollution makes the city virtually uninhabitable; Manhattan 2007 — a nuclear meltdown makes it a bad day for everyone; and last but not least, Washington 1995 — the capital is threatened by thousands of rampaging lawyers.

Let's rock!

Supervision will release the second in its series of Rock 'n' Roll Years CD titles in June, this time concentrating on the Sixties.

It contains thousands of trivia questions for all the old gits out there who can actually remember the 60s (and, hey, if you can remember them, you weren't really there, right?) and full-motion video clips of some of the kicking bands that were around at that time. The Seventies and Eighties titles will follow soon.

Hoboken **Heroes!**


"This is uncalled for!" complains Transistor Jowl, as he takes 10 damage. "I am not a crook!"

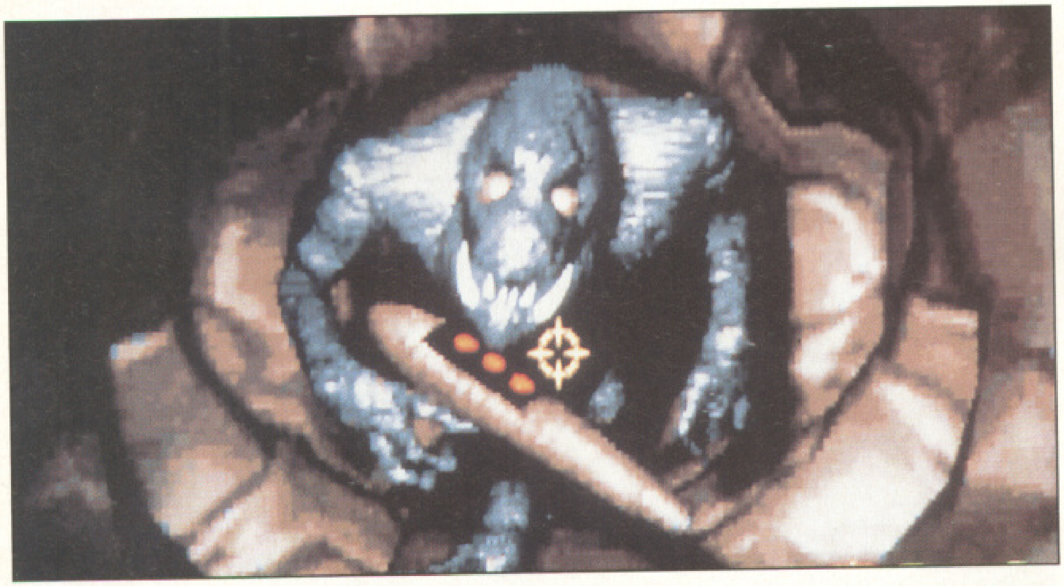
McMutant sings, "You deserve a break today!" and then he breaks Tropical Oil Man in several places for 25 damage.

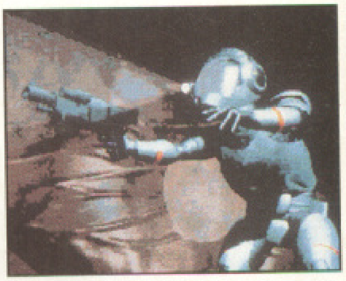
Fans of Superman, Batman et al who don't take their comic reading too seriously will no doubt be looking forward to Accolade's Superhero League Of Hoboken, the latest and possibly funniest game from Steve Meretsky, king of saucy adventure games.

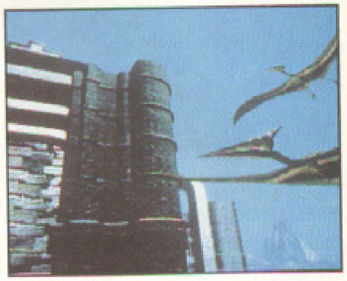
Apparently, Hoboken (Frank Sinatra's old New York stomping ground, I believe) has become a Valhalla of toxic waste, melted ice caps and abandoned shopping malls. And — wouldn't you know it? — the place is populated by mutant superheroes, which probably doesn't do the local law enforcement officers any favours at all.

Your crew of super-type persons include such luminaries as Captain Excitement, Zaniac and Tropical Oil Man, who each possess powers like 'Induce rust', 'Raise cholesterol level' and 'Talk to six-legged animals'. Equipped with all that, you get to ruck with McMutant, Steroid Man, Screaming Meemies, Samurai Welders, Junk Bond Amoebas and Lawyers (?), before taking on the rock-hard Dr Entropy (wayward evil genius, embraces the Forces Of Darkness, says totally insane things like "Today Hoboken — next stop the world", etc, etc).

Based around the same game engine as Accolade's Xanth game, Superhero League Of Hoboken is out in June on both disk and CD.





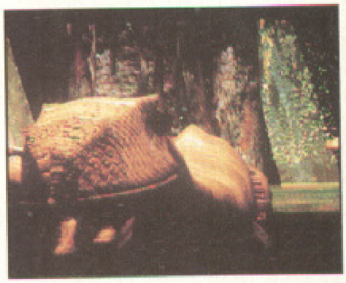


Virgin go CD!

Virgin announced two rather top-looking CD games at the show, namely The Lost Eden from French company Cryo and Creature Shock from Argonaut Software.

The Lost Eden is a strategy/adventure game along the lines of Cryo's earlier Dune tie-in, but replaces that game's hand-drawn graphics with gorgeously rendered hi-res images. As it has dinosaurs in it as well expect it to be big, big, big when it's released in a few month's time!

Creature Shock is further off, and is an Aliens-style all-action space adventure. Featuring some of the most stunning graphics EVER so they tell us), this is definitely a game to look out for. Indeed, we should have a preview for you next issue.



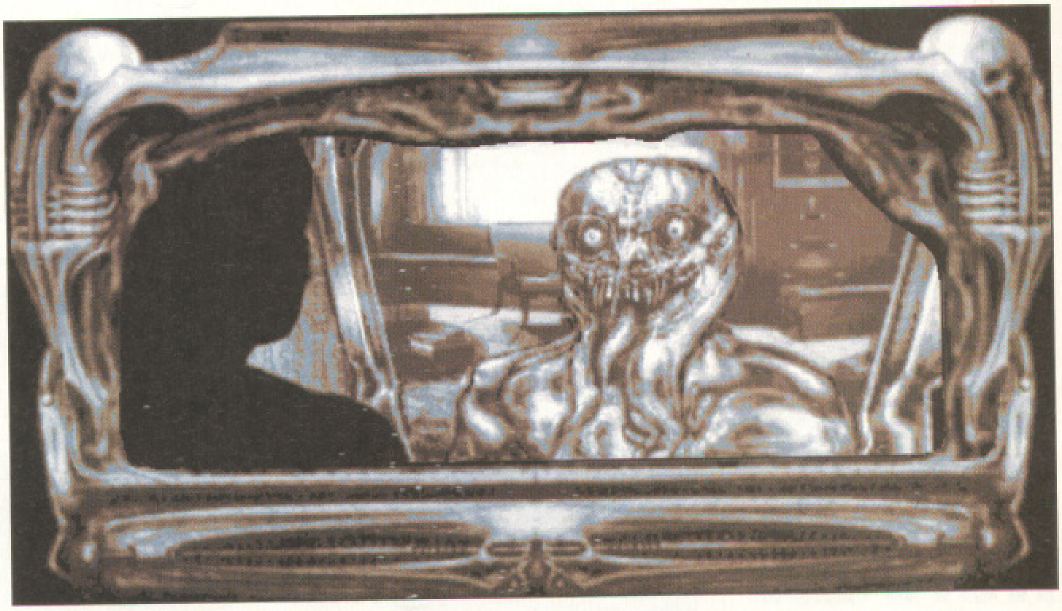
Testing times

After its success with Flight Sim Toolkit, Domark has now come up with Test Pilot which allows you to fly just about every plane that ever existed (although not all at the same time), from Tiger Moths to F1-11s. It should appear at around the end of the year.

THE SHADOW KNOWS...

Ocean has signed up The Shadow, which is set to be one of this summer's blockbuster movies and stars Alec Baldwin. The Shadow actually began life as a radio serial in the 30s, with Orson Welles as the voice of The Shadow.

These days, despite his advancing years, The Shadow hangs around in New York defending justice in his spare time. More often than not he finds himself up against Shiwan Khan who, like every other meglomaniac super-villain before him, has designs on world domination. Unfortunately there's no word yet on a release date for the game.



Cyberdreams Dream On

Despite only just having released Dark Seed CD, Cyberdreams has seen fit to announce Dark Seed II which will include more artwork from H. R. Giger who assisted with the original. Unfortunately there's not much more info yet as it's not due for release until early next year.

Further releases include the rather odd sounding graphic adventure I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream, based on a short story by 'famed' author Harlan Ellison, and an RPG called Hunters Of Ralk, which has been designed in conjunction with Gary Gygax who is known (to some) as the creator of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, and to others for having a ridiculous name.

Apparently Hunter Of Ralk will feature a 'fully-integrated angular combat system' which means that all those nasty baddies have a sort of artificial intelligence allowing them to adjust their fighting skills to match their opponents. Like Dark Seed II, don't expect to see either of these games until some time next year.

PC Screen shot

AMIGA Screen shot

PC Screen shot

AMIGA Screen shot

DAVID BRABEN PRESENTS

FRONTIER

ELITE II

1985 – ELITE

"Elite. Game? It's a way of life!"

Personal Computer World magazine

1993 - FRONTIER - ELITE II

**"The ultimate in space adventure,
Frontier is the single most important step forward
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CU Amiga – 97%

**only the very best
mature with time**

KONAMI

GAMETEK

Available on PC, AMIGA, ATARI ST

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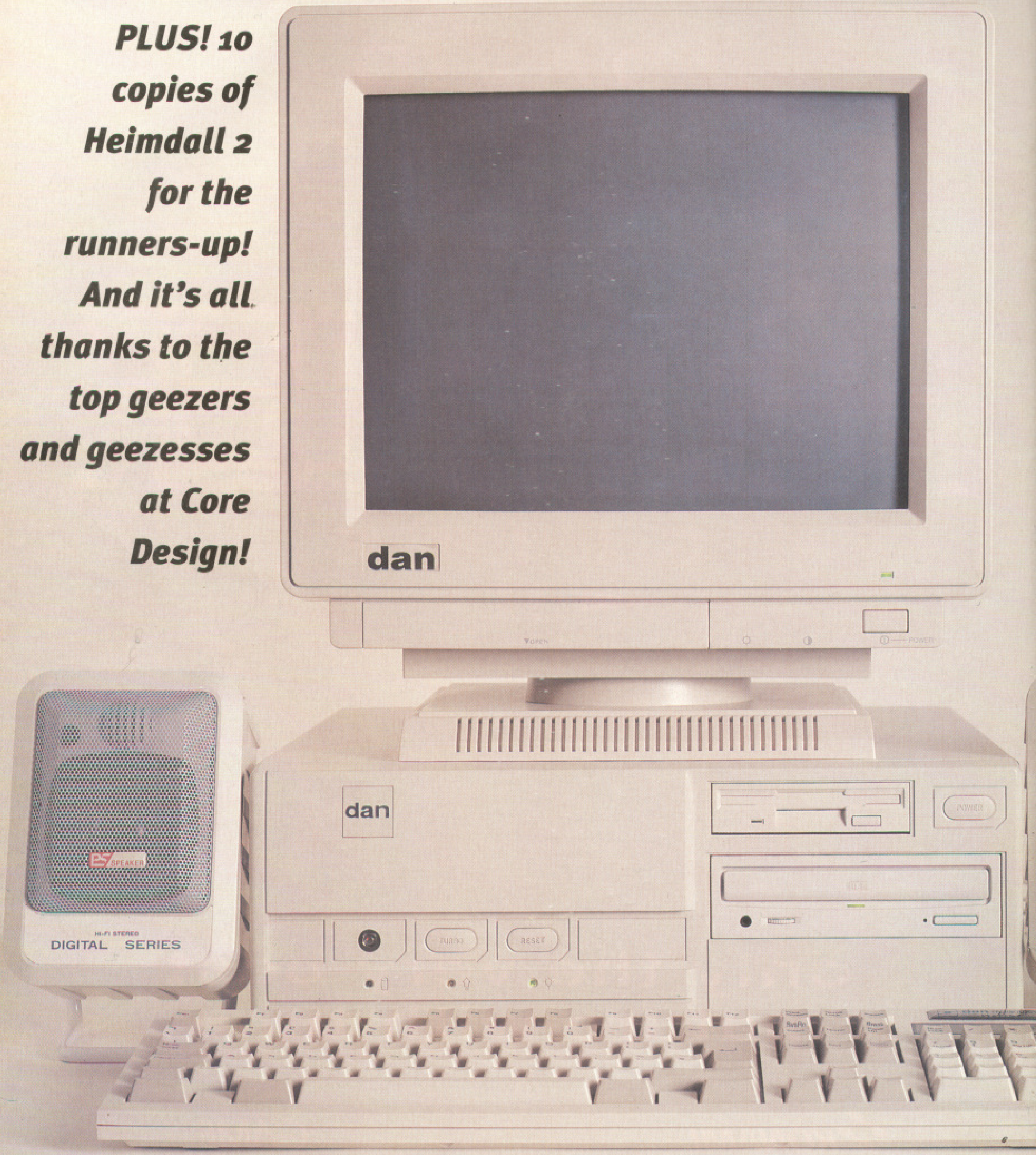
WIN! A multime

PLUS! 10 copies of Heimdall 2 for the runners-up! And it's all thanks to the top geezers and geezesses at Core Design!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ES SPEAKER
HI-FI STEREO
DIGITAL SERIES
RESET

e dia dan 486 PC!

WORTH OVER £1500!

Will you just take a look at that PC over there? Isn't it a beauty? Wouldn't you love to have it in your home, playing your games in the style they so richly deserve? You would? Then you've come to the right place, because we're offering one of you lucky devils out there in Reader Land the chance to win the whole kit and kaboodle.

This isn't just any old PC. Oh no, it's a dan PC, one of the finest makes of PC money can buy. Or, to be precise, Core Design's money can buy. You see, so chuffed are the Derby-based gaming whizzes at having the excellent Heimdall 2 just a few short weeks away from completion AND having a spiffy demo attached to the cover of this issue of PC GAMES, that they've stumped up the cash for this competition prize — well over ú1500's worth of cash, in fact.

In case you haven't played the demo yet, let us explain that Heimdall 2 is the sequel to Heimdall (strangely enough), Core's smasheroo of a hit that stormed the software charts about two years ago.

Well, now Heimy-babes is back, back, BACK! Once again the evil Loki is causing all sorts of trouble and it's up to our Norse hero to sort him out good and proper. If you love arcade adventures you'll love Heimdall 2, and if you don't this will probably convert you. (And if you love hoary old games journo cliches, then you probably liked that last sentence as well...)

Greetings, friend. If you have come in answer to my plea then hear my advisor

THOSE PRIZES IN FULL

So what do you get if you win? Well, you get a dan DX33 486PC, which comes complete with a double-speed Sony CD-ROM drive, 14" S-VGA colour monitor, 210Mb hard drive, 8Mb of RAM, Sound Blaster Pro soundcard, speakers, 3.5" floppy disk drive, keyboard, mouse, DOS 6.2 and Windows 3.1. Phew!

On top of that, the lucky winner — there can be only one, we're afraid — will win a copy of Heimdall 2 to play on his or her new PC, as will the ten not-quite-so-lucky runners-up.

ALRIGHT, ENOUGH YAKKING — WHAT DO I DO?

Go straight to the front of the mag, remove that demo of Heimdall 2 and get it installed on the crummy, low-rent PC you've got now. Play it. Not just a little bit. Right through to the end.

Done that? Good. Now tell us briefly what wonders lie beyond the magical shield wall at the top of the stairs in the King's chamber. How many rooms are there? What do you see in each of them? What happens in each of them? Get the idea?

Write all this done on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and send it in to us at: Hey — nice PC! Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. And don't forget to include your name and address or you'll have no chance, no matter how good your answers are.

All entries must reach us by the 28th of June 1994, when there will be a grand entry plucking session. The first entry picked will win the PC, and the next ten will win a copy of Heimdall 2.

Got that? Right, now get playing...

THE SMALL PRINT

This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images, their relatives or their friends — should they have any. The competition closes on the 28th of June 1994, and the winner will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is final (as always) and no correspondence will be entered into. While ever care is taken, we can accept no responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post.

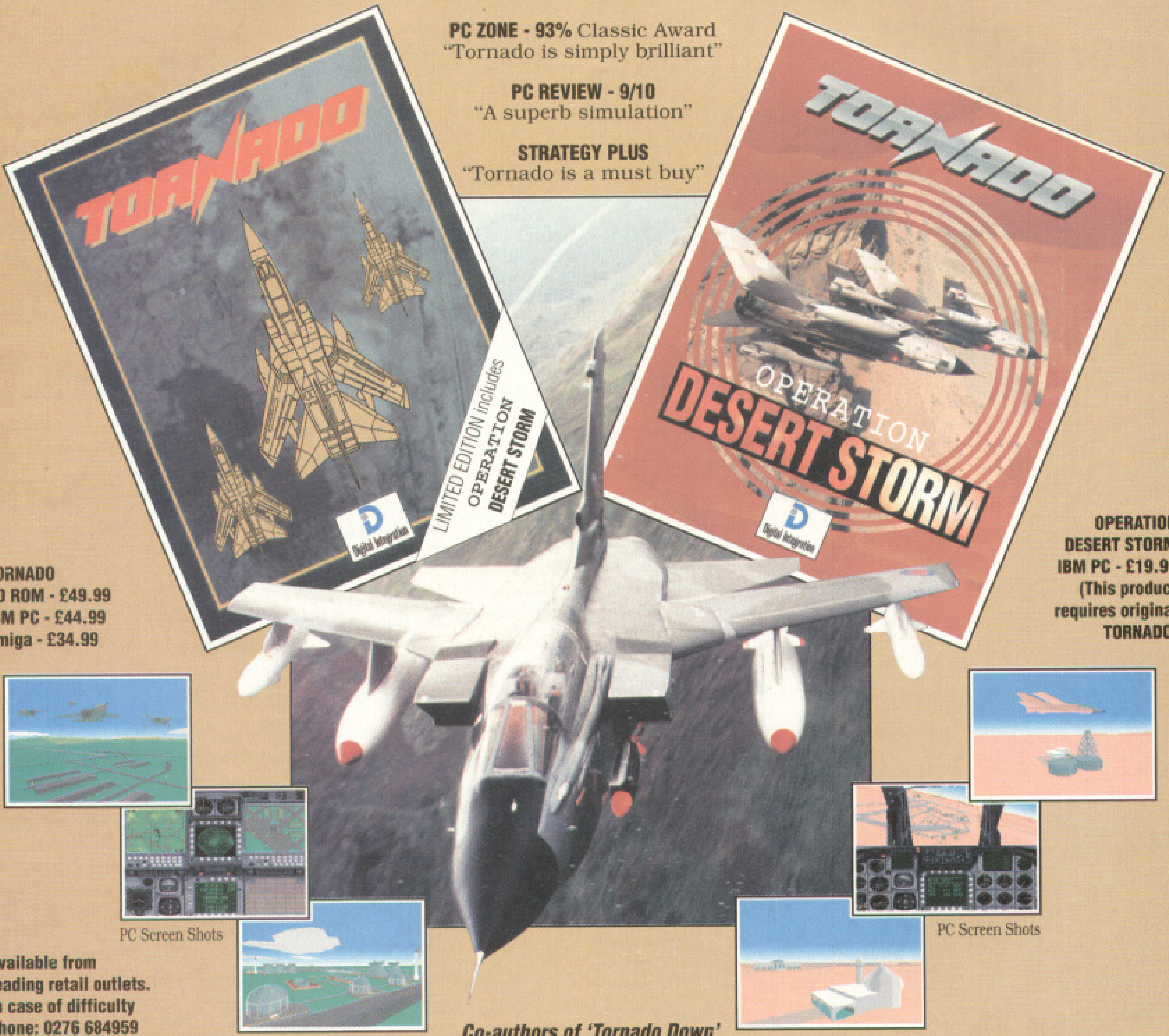
TORNADO

At the eye of the storm

PC ZONE - 93% Classic Award
"Tornado is simply brilliant"

PC REVIEW - 9/10
"A superb simulation"

STRATEGY PLUS
"Tornado is a must buy"



TORNADO
CD ROM - £49.99
IBM PC - £44.99
Amiga - £34.99

OPERATION
DESERT STORM
IBM PC - £19.99
(This product requires original TORNADO)

PC Screen Shots

PC Screen Shots

Available from leading retail outlets. In case of difficulty phone: 0276 684959

VISA Access

Co-authors of 'Tornado Down'

"What an excellent simulation! It flies like the real thing." - *Flight Lieutenant John Peters*

"Outstanding - as close as you'll get without joining the RAF." - *Flight Lieutenant John Nichol*

200 ft. 600 kts. You lead a formation of six Tornados deep into enemy territory. Terrain following system on. Mission planned to the last detail. Split second timing for a synchronised attack with pin-point accuracy.

- From simulator training to multi-mission campaigns
- Unsurpassed real world detail
- 2 player head-to-head
- Laser-guided bombs, JP233, Alarm and more
- Unequalled authenticity
- Night flying & low visibility

The special limited edition includes both Tornado and Operation Desert Storm add-on scenario (PC & CD ROM). For existing owners of Tornado, Operation Desert Storm is available as a seperate item.

Digital Integration

It's 0100 hours, January 17 1991. Your Tornado squadron has a mission - to obliterate the airfields of Iraq. You're the only logical choice.

In a few hours time you'll be flying straight through the middle of the densest air defences in the Gulf, and in a hostile desert landscape there is nowhere to hide.

Features of Operation Desert Storm

- New flying area, with desert landscape
- New enemy aircraft and military vehicles
- 18 new missions, pre-planned for instant action

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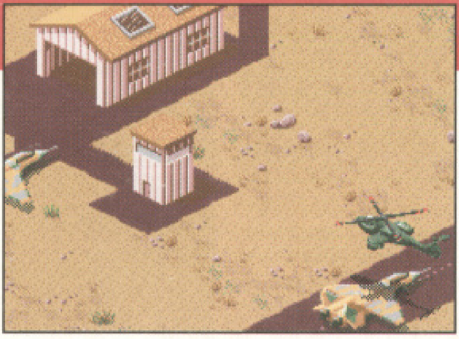
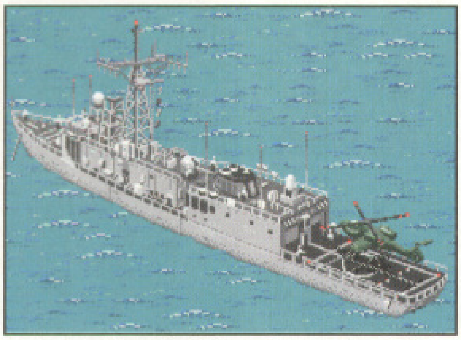
previews

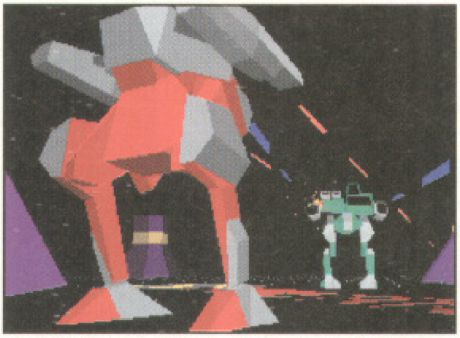
We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I will spend the rest of our lives. And if you are interested in the future, then you must also be interested in our Previews section. For this is where we take a look at the games of tomorrow today. Or something.

Anyway, join us now as we peer into our magic crystal ball and see...

World Cup USA94







BioForge......26

Yeah, yeah, so everyone seems to be calling their latest game an Interactive Movie, but Origin's latest and possibly greatest venture looks like it might have more right to lay claim to the title than most. David Upchurch investigates and meets Lex, a cyborg with a mission...

Battledrome......30

Wa-hey! This is what we want to see in a combat game — massive great robot monster-type things beating each other up in Cyberspace. David 'Robojock' Upchurch was duly dispatched, monkey wrench in hand, to take a peek under the hood of Dynamix's metallic baby.

Flight Of The Amazon Queen......32

After the graphic grimness of recent adventures such as Gabriel Knight and Police Quest IV, it's good to hear that Renegade's newy is packed with more than its fair share of chuckles and light-hearted japes. Alex Fraser books a window seat and waits for the in-flight movie.

TIE Fighter......34

Paaarp-paaarp-paaarp, parp-pa-parp, parp-pa-parp! (This is meant to be Darth Vader's theme, by the way — feel free to join in if you know the words.) Okay, so you've played our fantastic and completely EXCLUSIVE demo — but that only tells you half the story. Dean Evans feels the Force...

Desert Strike......36

Although conversions from the Amiga to the PC are fairly commonplace, this is the first time that a game's been converted from the dreaded Megadrive. How can a console game possibly appeal to the sophisticated PC gamesplayer? David Upchurch finds out — and is more than pleasantly suprised...

World Cup USA 1994......38

Sensible Soccer aside, footy-loving PC gamesplayers have been pretty poorly served in terms of computerised renditons of their favourite sport — until now, that is. With its official World Cup tie-in, US Gold looks like it may have developed the soccer game to beat them all. Dean Evans gives it a kick around.

Lights! Camera!

With BioForge, Origin hopes to create a new generation of truly interactive Interactive Movies. And from what David Upchurch has seen, it looks like they're going to do it...

GAME	BIOFORGE
PUBLISHER	ORIGIN
DEVELOPER	In-house team
WORK STARTED	SEPTEMBER 1992
DUE FOR COMPLETION	JUNE 1994

Er, excuse me — could you hold the line a second, please?" Sure, no problem — after all, it's taken me an age to set up this interview with Ken Demarest, and I'm not going to let him go now. Despite Ken's hand over his phone mouthpiece I can still hear muffled snatches of the conversation taking place in his office. There's some laughing and what could quite possibly be mild swearing, then Ken returns to the phone. "I'm sorry about that," apologises Ken. "We've got a Robotron machine in-house now, and somebody just came in and told me they might have beaten my high-score!"

For those who don't know their arcade history, let me explain that Robotron is a simple arcade shoot-'em-up created by coin-op kings Williams in the early '80s. A lot of software companies have coin-ops in their offices, but Ken works for Origin, a company whose name is synonymous with ground-breaking, processor-stretching software. Being told that Origin staff enjoy playing Robotron in their spare time is akin to learning that Porsche employees drive Mini Estates on their day's off.

Ken, however, is unrepentant.

"Oh God, I *love* those old games," he enthuses. "The gameplay values in some of them was *so* good. That's one of the things I want to keep in BioForge. Yeah, it's a high-tech product, it's got a lot of flash, it's cutting edge, so on and so forth, but at the end of the day I want it to be *fun*."

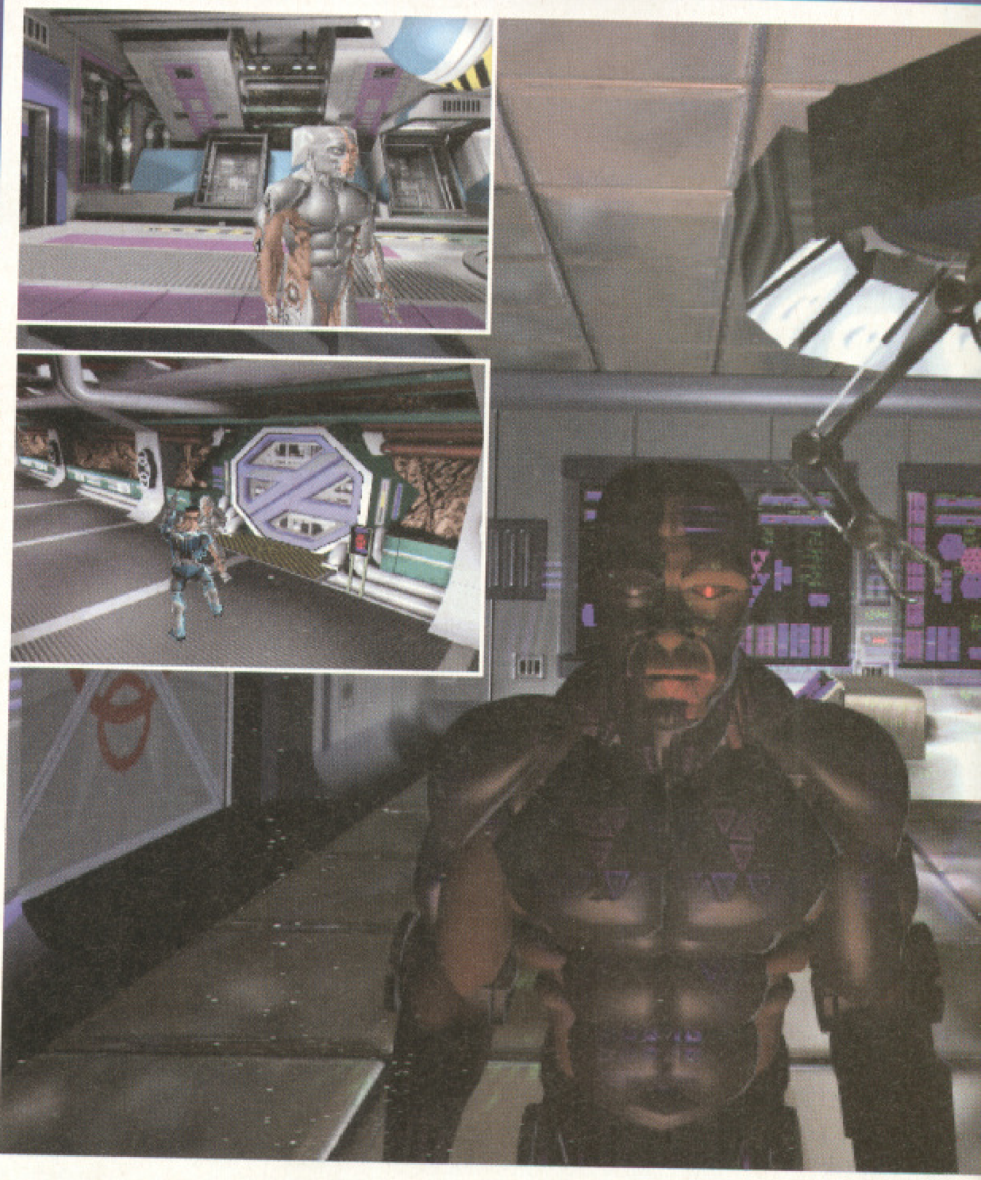
Ken is the Project Leader on BioForge, charged with overseeing every stage of the game's creation. It's a weighty responsibility, for with BioForge Origin hopes to create the first truly interactive Interactive Movie.

> **"Just because a game has live action video that doesn't automatically make it an Interactive Movie."**
>
> *Richard Garriott, Origin's Creative Director.*

In BioForge you control Lex, a half-human/half-machine cyborg who awakes to find himself in the midst of a strange alien environment. At the start of the game you don't know who you are, where you are or why you're there, but you what you do know is that there's something very *wrong*. As the game progresses Lex goes on a bizarre journey of self discovery, which eventually results in our hero uncovering a grotesque alien plot of immense and terrifying proportions...

It's essentially an action/adventure game, with Lex having to solve problems and battle bad guys on his way to finding out his true identity. In many ways it resembles Infogrames' Alone In The Dark, only much, much, much more sophisticated. With its use of realistically-animated 3D characters and cinematic cut-scenes, seeing it in action you'd be forgiven for thinking you were watching — dare I say it? — a movie. Only this is one movie you can interact with...

Work first started on BioForge nearly a year and a half ago, in September 1992. "Coming up with the 3D guys — or what we call 'synthetic actors' — was the

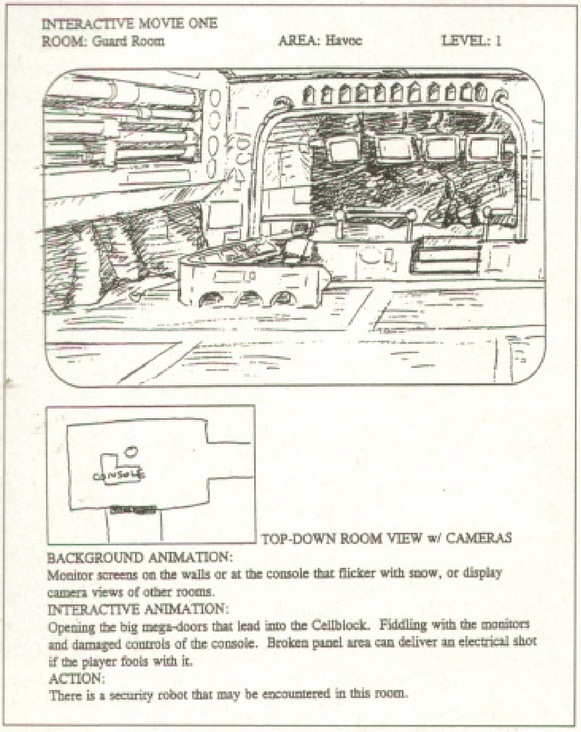


(Above inset) Ken remembers clearly the moment when he first realised that he and his team were onto something big with BioForge... "It's when we went into one of our regular product reviews and first showed the game off to other members of the company — we got a spontaneous round of applause. That's when I thought 'Hey...'"

(Above) At various stages in the game, Lex gets to try out various cyborg suits, including a mirror suit that reflects his surroundings in a similar way to the T1000 in Terminator 2. Ken, however, won't reveal how this incredible effect was achieved... "Ooooh! Top Secret!" he laughs. "Ask me about it after the game comes out!"

Interaction!

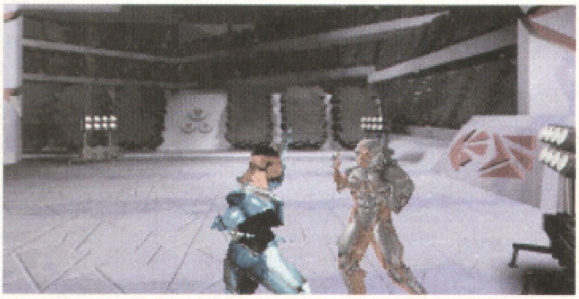
(Above) Ken Demarest, the Project Leader on BioForge.



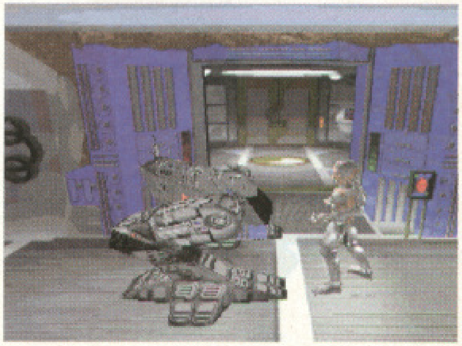
INTERACTIVE MOVIE ONE
ROOM: Guard Room AREA: Havoc LEVEL: 1

TOP-DOWN ROOM VIEW w/ CAMERAS

BACKGROUND ANIMATION:
Monitor screens on the walls or at the console that flicker with snow, or display camera views of other rooms.
INTERACTIVE ANIMATION:
Opening the big mega-doors that lead into the Cellblock. Fiddling with the monitors and damaged controls of the console. Broken panel area can deliver an electrical shot if the player fools with it.
ACTION:
There is a security robot that may be encountered in this room.

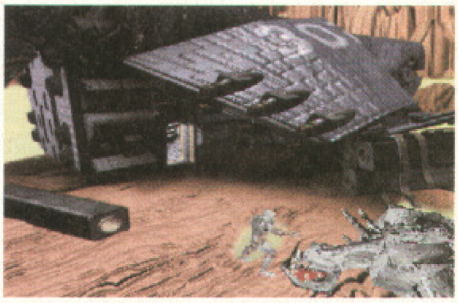


Origin has big plans for its synthetic actor technology. "We've already licensed out the synthetic actor engine to two other companies," says Ken, "one of which'll be using it to develop a game and one of which will be using it to create an educational product. And the synthetic actors are already being incorporated into other Origin games like Bounty Hunter."

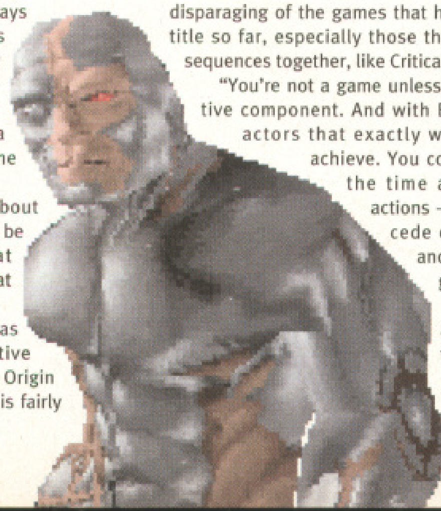


There are over twenty combat moves — which should please Street Fighter 2 fans, if nothing else. "You don't have to learn or get a handle on all the moves to be successful," Ken points out, "but for the people who enjoy combat they can bring it as far as they like. Also it's kind of fun to see your character doing all these neat combat moves."

(Left) Before any coding started on BioForge, Ken and his team drew up a 150-page movie-style 'storyboard' detailing every room in the game — its contents, which characters reside there, what Lex can do there and what major plot developments happen there.



(Below left) Although Ken and his team have achieved most of things they originally set out to do, there's one thing that eluded them... "Yeah, face close-ups, where the face actually animates as a character speaks and looks human," sighs Ken. "As we're not on CD we don't have tons of speech, although we do have some. Getting good close-ups probably has as much difficulty involved in it as getting the synthetic actors working in the first place."



thing that got me initially fired up," says Ken. "I felt that synthetic actors was technology that Origin as a company really needed to invest in if it was to be a dominant force in the future. And I also thought it'd be a heck of a lot of fun! I guess the fun part came first, and the justification came later!

"From there we brainstormed about how we could do it and how it would be best used, and it turned out that Interactive Movies was the place that was ripe for using this kind of thing."

Origin has some pretty clear ideas as to what constitutes an Interactive Movie (see the 'Interactive Movies: Origin has its say' panel), and Ken himself is fairly disparaging of the games that have laid claim to the title so far, especially those that just stream video sequences together, like Critical Path.

"You're not a game unless you have an interactive component. And with BioForge's synthetic actors that exactly what we're going to achieve. You control a character all the time and control all his actions — you don't just intercede every now and then and make a decision to go left or right.

Ken spent several months developing the basic synthetic actor technology, purely to see if it was workable or not. He used elements of Strike Commander's 3D engine to create the basic synthetic actors, and once they were functioning more people were moved onto the BioForge project. The synthetic actors rapidly became much more sophisticated in both their look and how they moved.

"The original 3D models were textured by hand," explains Ken, "but now we're rendering each creature entirely in 3D Studio and then applying the textures created onto the game's simplified 3D models."

To create each characters' huge range of animations, Ken and his team used a sensor suit called 'The Flock Of Birds'. The sensors were placed on actors who then performed each characters' movements.

The sensors' data was then fed into a piece of hardware developed by Origin called 'Salsa'. "The Salsa can take The Flock Of Bird's data and put it right into

SETTING THE SCENE

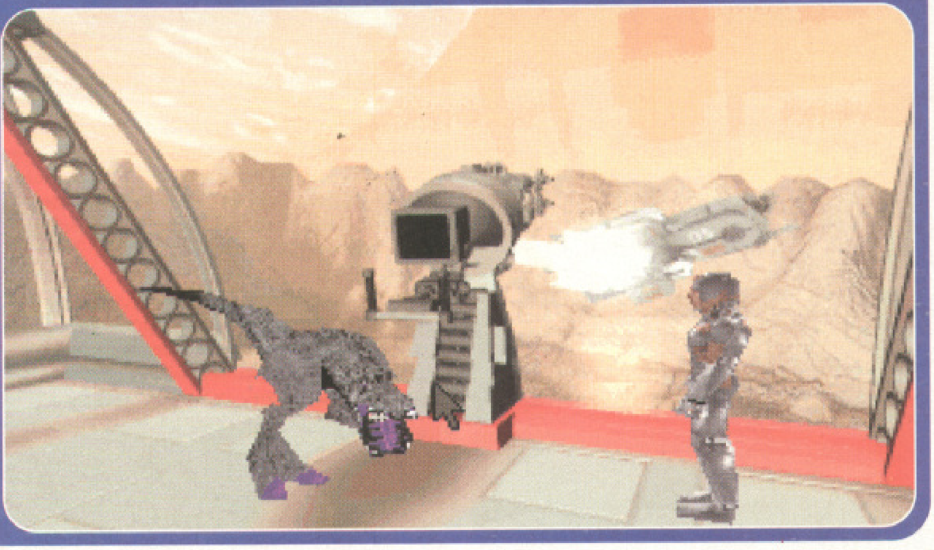
Although it was always planned that BioForge would 'star' synthetic actors, the type of world in which these actors would perform changed several times during the game's initial design period.

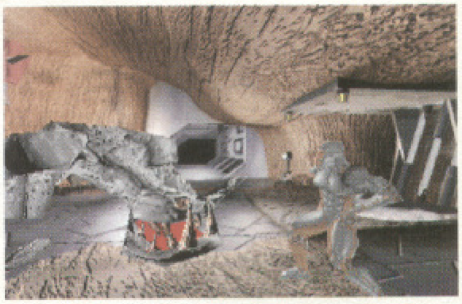
"We actually had other concepts originally which ran along the lines of Doom," explains Ken. "But that would've required we develop the 2.5D engine [to create a Doom-like 3D environment with restricted vertical movement] at the same time as developing the synthetic actors technology and that was just a little too steep — trying to develop two major technologies at once would've been way too tough."

Instead, Ken and his team opted for 'fixed' backdrops. These were first created in 3D Studio, and then rendered from various angles and viewpoints. The resulting graphics were then ported straight across into the code. During play, the BioForge game engine decides how to cut between the various views depending on what Lex is up to.

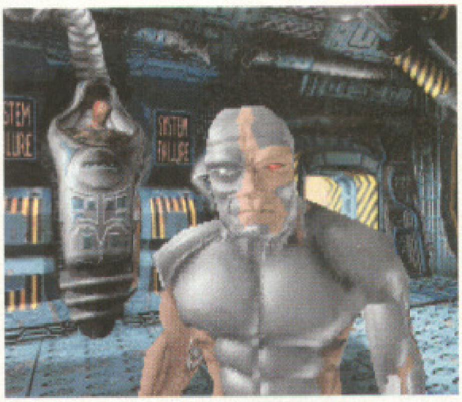
Unlike Alone In The Dark's scenery, BioForge's sets are frequently animated and Lex can interact with them to a high degree — and they can interact right back, too. "The scenes that you walk around aren't just backgrounds; they're real and they've got objects in them that you can interact with," says Ken, "so it's not just something that you're passively watching — it's something that you're part of.

"For example, you might be running along a rocky ledge with an acidic pool below you. Meanwhile over to your right is a enemy ship which is just taking off and firing laser bolts at you, which you have to dodge — there's that kind of interactivity. The ship taking off is basically a rendered 3D Studio 'flick' [animation], but that flick is having some impact on you — it's actually interacting with you."





With most software companies keen to produce CD-only games, it's a surprise to learn that BioForge is designed for floppy. "One of the things we really trying to impress on everyone," says Ken, "is that BioForge is the start of the Interactive Movie genre, and that everything they've seen before can be put on the shelf. So in order to do that, we felt we had to stay with floppy just for the first product in order to make a real impact."



"I think that players will definitely empathise with Lex," believes Ken. "During the course of the game he keeps a journal, and the player can look at that during the game and read his feelings and thoughts on his experiences, which gives you an insight into his mind and his psyche."

one of the synthetic actors in real-time," explains Ken. "So someone will put on the suit of sensors and Salsa will display the final way the character will look as the actor moves around. The beauty of this is that you get immediate feedback on whether a sequence works well or not. And by putting the sensors in a different position on the actors then they can control the movements of a robot or an alien."

The resulting animations are stunningly fluid and unbelievably realistic — something which, sadly, can't really be conveyed adequately by the static screenshots shown here.

It was during this early development of the synthetic actor technology that Alone In The Dark appeared...

"When Alone In The Dark first came out I was pretty annoyed that they'd also come up with the idea of using 3D guys!" admits Ken. "But their technology is substantially behind what we're trying to do. We're trying to use real cinematic techniques, but they're just winging it. And we're using the live-motion capture for the animation, but they're doing all their's by hand. We striving for a much more organic feel in BioForge."

> **"[BioForge is] a high-tech product, it's got a lot of flash, it's cutting edge, so on and so forth, but at the end of the day I want it to be fun."**
>
> *Ken Demarest, BioForge's Project Leader.*

Lex is controlled via the keypad. At its most basic level, the keypad allows you walk around, but by pressing other keys simultaneously Lex can be made to perform a wide range of actions such as punch, kick, jump and use objects. "Performing actions in certain situations may result in much more grandiose results than normal," adds Ken. "For example, you can jump anywhere, but if you jump in the right situation then something more dramatic might happen. I don't want to give too much away, but that's the general idea..."

Because the player has total control over Lex and can interact with almost every element of his environment, the gameplay offers a degree of freedom that's unparalleled in computer games. "I think that everyone's going to play their own game of BioForge," believes Ken. "It'll be a little bit different for each person."

"Basically there's often more than one solution to a problem," adds Ken. "You can just slug your way through the whole game if you want to, although you've got to use your mind sometimes. And also there are very frequently times when instead of slugging your way through, you'll find it easier to brain your way through."

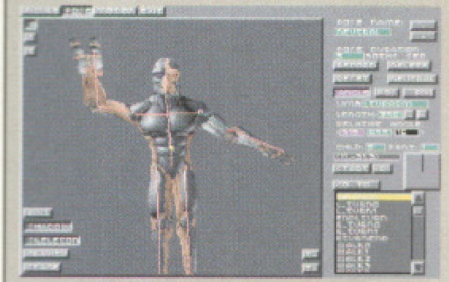
The way you play also affects the game's final outcome. "You don't really know who you are when the game starts because you've lost your memory," says Ken. "But by the end you'll discover who you were. Along the way there are a lot of actions you can make that seem ambiguous and don't have any direct story impact — you just make your own moral or ethical choice and the game will still be solvable. But at the end of the game, depending on the type of choices you've made, you'll turn out to be one kind of a person or another kind of a person. So if you just kill everybody then you'll turn out to be a mass murderer!

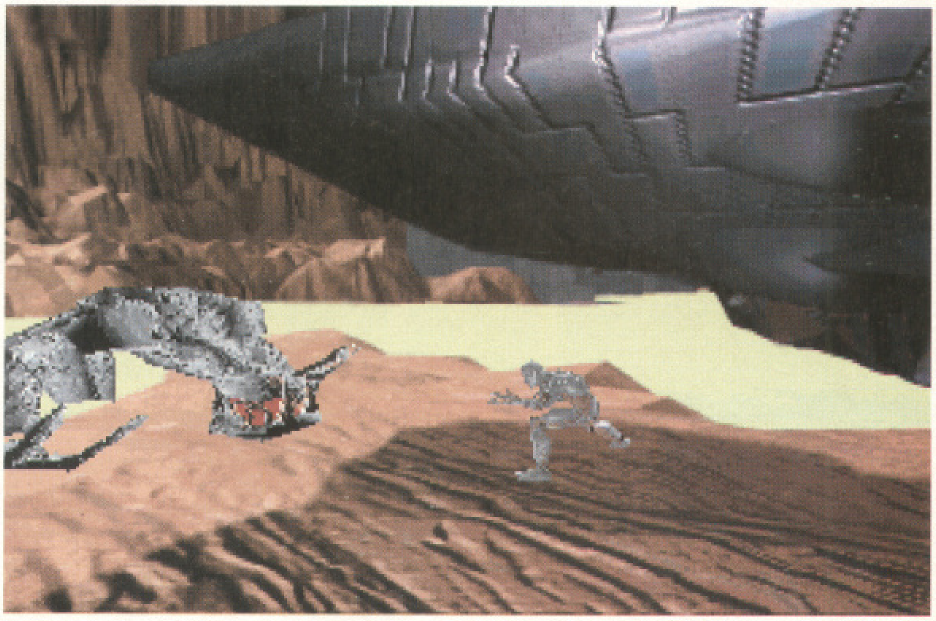
To maintain the movie-like feel, Ken and his team have had to devise a way to give the game's plot a constant forward momentum. "The plot develops kind of like an hourglass," he explains. "You have many, many choices as to what to do, but sooner or later it all heads towards a sub-climax. After that your choices broaden out again and then eventually it narrows again to another sub-climax. It all helps to keep the plot going. If you don't have that then you have an infinitely diverse game that would take an infinite time to write!" (And, presumably, an infinite amount of time to play...)

"Also, we tried to make the player feel motivated and give them a clear idea of what their goals are, unlike, say, a graphic adventure where your aim is often nebulous and you don't really know what you're working towards."

The movie feel is further heightened by the use of 'cuts', where the the player's view of the action changes depending on where they are and what's happening to them. "It's tough to make camera cuts that are actually dramatic rather than simply being there to keep the player in view," says Ken. "So we've tried to settle on a happy medium. You've got to stay in view so the camera cuts are frequently con-

(Below) The Salsa interprets the data from The Flock Of Birds sensor suit and pipes it straight into the game's synthetic actors, allowing the 3D models to follow the performer's movements in real-time.





BioForge's sound promises to be special — for a start, the team are using a nifty programming technique to make you think your Sound Blaster card has eight channels of sound. "We actually mix the sound together in software," says Ken, "so that although you've only got four channels it actually sounds like eight."

trolled by that, but there are also cuts to heighten the impact of dramatic moments.

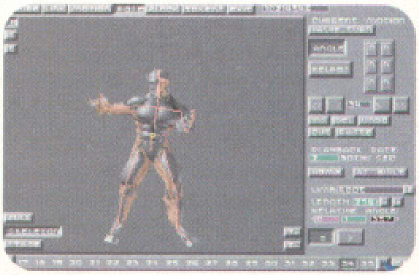
In addition, there are animated 'cut scenes', where the player's view switches to a close-up on a certain action or event. The difficult thing with these, however, is knowing when to integrate them with the action so that they're not jarring or confusing.

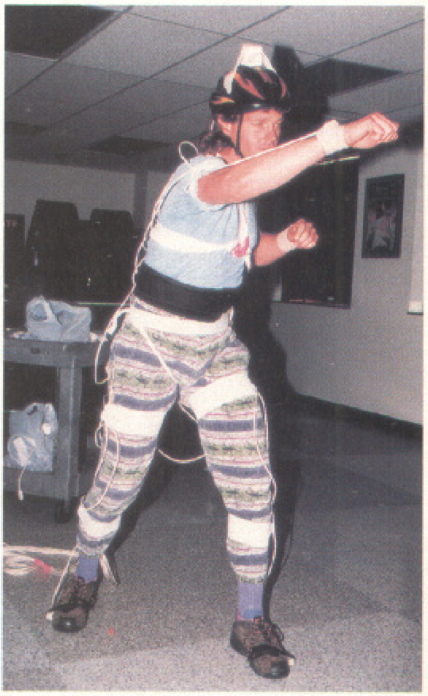
"The key is you only make a cut like that when the player would expect it anyway," explains Ken. "Say the character has to pry open a door. Well, during the prying there's no 'pry' movement, he just starts prying when you ask him to. And during that prying motion you have no control over him — and that's a *perfect* moment to do a cut-away. And then when the cut-away finishes you cut back to the character, the prying motion finishes, the door opens and control resumes.

"If we were to do a cut scene in a fight then we'd probably wait until you were knocked down and you were temporarily unconscious. Then when you got back up, control would resume."

The creation of BioForge has been a learning experience for Ken and his team. "You have to come up with a whole new set of rules for Interactive Movies," reckons Ken. "I mean, we've taken as much as we can from movies, but movies don't have to worry about the fact that the lead character may wander into every part of a room, because they control what happens. We're having to make up those rules as we go along. I think we've got the most fundamental things covered, and we're now starting to establish a clear idea of where we need to go. If there are any mistakes to be made we're definitely making 'em now, rather than later!

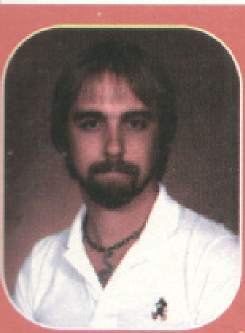
"Even so, as far as I think streaming video games are away from being true Interactive Movies, I still think that we also have a way to go before we can *truly* earn that title..."





(Above) The Flock Of Birds sensor suit in action. "The performers are not 'professional' actors but internal people who have dance, martial arts or mime experience," says Ken.

INTERACTIVE MOVIES: Origin has its say



Richard Garriott, Origin's Creative Director, is something of a legend in the PC games world. It was he who founded Origin way back in the early 80s, and he is also the mastermind behind the incredibly popular Ultima games (the latest of which, Pagan: Ultima VIII, is glowingly reviewed on page 46). He's also a man with strong opinions, especially about what is and what isn't an 'Interactive Movie':

"[The term 'Interactive Movies' has] already become a sort of buzzword with the general press, so it's being applied to a lot of games which aren't really Interactive Movies," believes Richard. "Just because a game has live action video that doesn't automatically make it an Interactive Movie, because you have very little control over the actor. Neither is a game in which you click on an icon, then sit back and watch a scene take place. That's not true interaction or emotional involvement.

"We have some definite ideas of what should be called an Interactive Movie. Plot and pace are critical. Not all our products will be Interactive Movies, but those that are will fall within certain parameters. The challenge will be to continue the evolution of that style of game."

These parameters, as defined by Origin, are outlined below:

(1) An Interactive Movie employs the conventions of film to tell a story, including the use of synthetic or video-based actors, cinematic camera and editing techniques, dynamic action-sensitive musical score and digitised speech and sound effects.

(2) In an Interactive Movie, the evolution of the story — including the tempo with which it unfolds — is directed by the game designer, sweeping the player along with it.

(3) Interactive Movies strive to deliver a seamless integration of the passive and interactive portions of the game, and require a high degree of player interaction to advance the story.

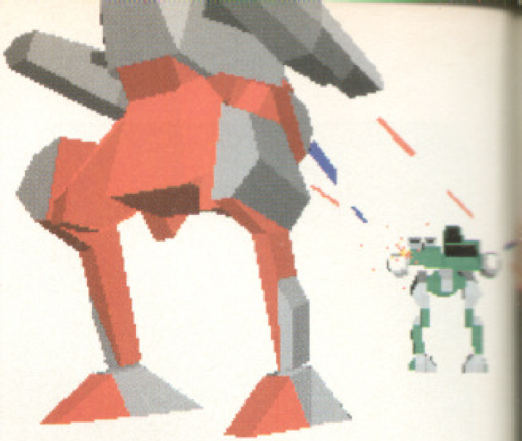
(4) An Interactive Movie totally immerses the player in the story and provides an emotional context for the gameplay.

Strong stuff. Of course, how closely BioForge adheres to these guidelines has yet to be seen...

preview

Heavy Metal

Big robots with guns and missile launchers kicking the scrap out of each other — that's Battledrome. David Upchurch takes a good look...



GAME	BATTLEDROME
PUBLISHER	DYNAMIX
DEVELOPER	In-house — Mark Crowe (producer & art director); Tim Gift & Dave Selle (designers); Jeon Rezvani (programmer); Damon Mitchell (3D artist).
WORK *STARTED*	MAY 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	SUMMER 1994

Coin-op beat-'em-ups like Street Fighter 2 and Mortal Kombat are all very well and good, but where's the fun in slugging it out with just your hands and feet? What you want is a pulse cannon. Or a missile launcher. What you want, dear reader, is Battledrome...

Coming soon from Dynamix, Battledrome is a slick one-on-one combat game wherein two horribly-beweaponed robots slug it out in Cyberspace arenas for cash prizes. There's a wide range of computer opponents that you can choose to compete against, and the tougher they are, the bigger the prize — assuming you defeat them, of course.

The money you win, either by fighting or gambling (you can even bet on yourself if you feel cocky), can then be used to buy weapon upgrades or even a new, improved robot chassis from the ten available.

Battledrome is the first game in Dynamix's proposed Metaltech series. However, they're no strangers to games featuring big robots with even bigger guns, as it was they who wrote the ancient Mechwarrior. "Not many people are aware that Dynamix was Mechwarrior's original designers," says Mark Crowe, Battledrome's producer, "and this our chance to improve on that technology."

And improve on that technology they have. The robot-bashing is depicted in solid 3D, with the player able to view the proceedings from a variety in- and out-of-cockpit views. One of the most impressive things about the game is the animation of the robots, which conveys a real impression of size and bulk. "That was one of the hardest parts of the whole game's development," admits Mark. "It was real tough getting the robot movement just right so that they would look believable."

Compared to recent 3D games such as Origin's Strike Commander, Battledrome looks, well, a little *primitive*. There's a good reason for this — speed. "There's no Gouraud shading or texture mapping purely for performance reasons," explains Mark. "We kept it relatively simple to maximise the performance capabilities of the robots and so that we were able to include complex 3D shapes."

Although this lack of graphic frippery may disappoint some, most will feel Mark and the team have made the right decision, as in play the action is wonderfully fast and incredibly exciting — and I'd rather have that over sluggish texture-mapped frills any day.

As anyone who's experienced Doom head-to-head on a network will tell you, you can't beat playing a game against a human opponent. It's one thing waving your fist in triumph after a victory against a computer opponent, but another entirely knowing that your vanquished foe is sitting alone somewhere, slumped despondently over their keyboard.

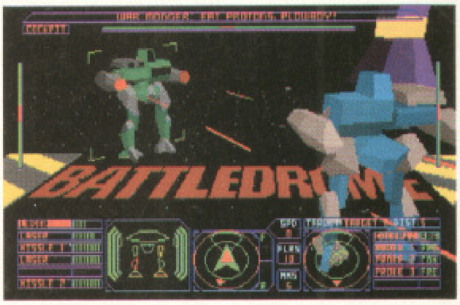
It's a good thing, then, that Battledrome also allows the player to link up with other robot jocks anywhere in the world and clank robots together. "Modem play was always one of our primary goals," explains Mark. "There's a serial link option in there as well for direct play."

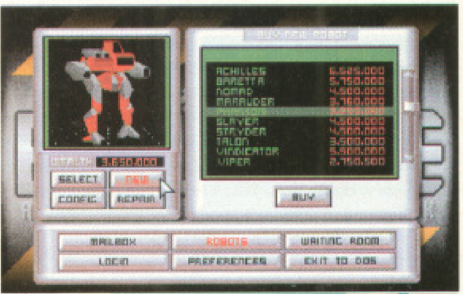
However, whether Battledrome will supercede Doom as the network gamesplayer's favourite time-waster has yet to be seen. "They're not really comparable games," says Mark, "because they're each in totally different genres. However, this is a game even your kids could play." (Something that couldn't really be said of Doom!)

Work's almost complete on Battledrome, and Mark is pretty pleased with what they've achieved. "Battledrome is exactly the game we set out to create in the first place," he says. "In fact, it actually turned out better than we hoped. There are features in the game that any fan would expect and some they may be pleasantly surprised with."

Once Battledrome's bagged, tagged and in the shops, the team plan to start work on Earthsiege, the next game in the Metaltech series. "In Earthsiege you'll play a member of a four-strong Herc squadron battling in a real-world environment, as opposed to the stark Virtual Reality environment of Battledrome," explains Mark. "It'll be a giant leap in the Metaltech series with all the bells and whistles, like bitmap texturing, Gouraud shading and campaign-orientated battle scenarios..."

Don't get too excited though, as Earthsiege is a long way off. For now, be content with beating up your best mate — virtually, *of course*...





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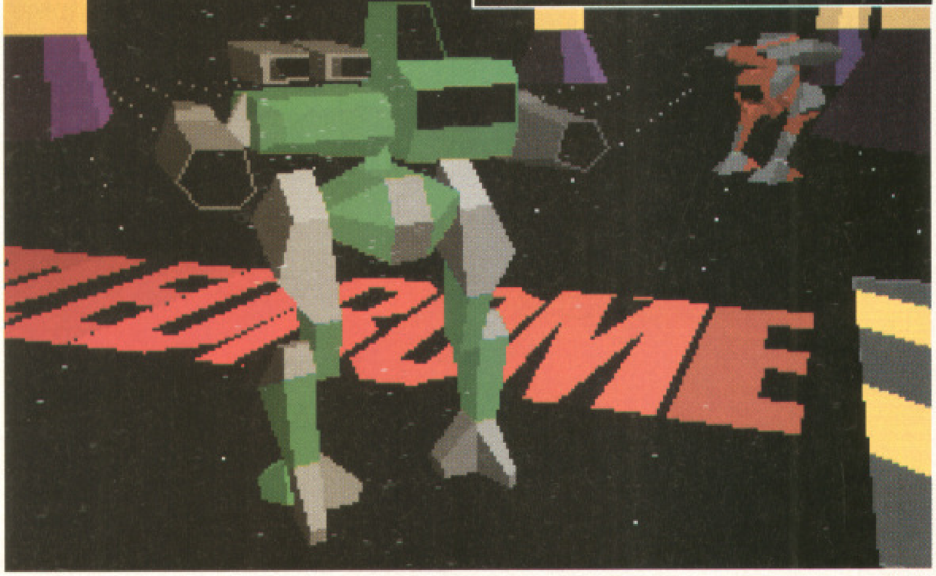

(Above right) Win cash and you can buy upgrades for your droid's weaponry and chassis — nukes are on special offer today.
(Above) Each player is able to launch probes which you can use to spy on what's going on in other areas of the arena.

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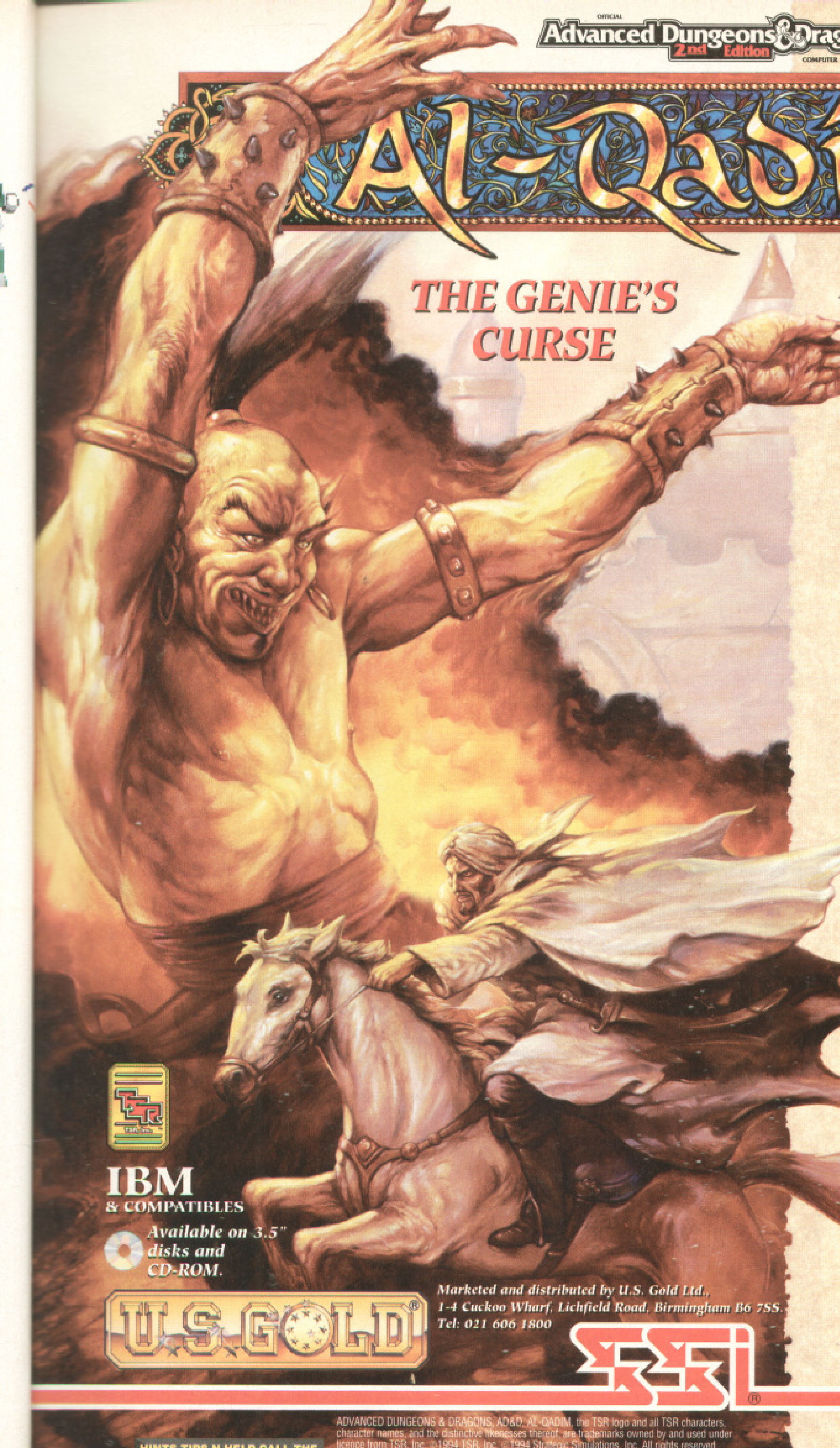

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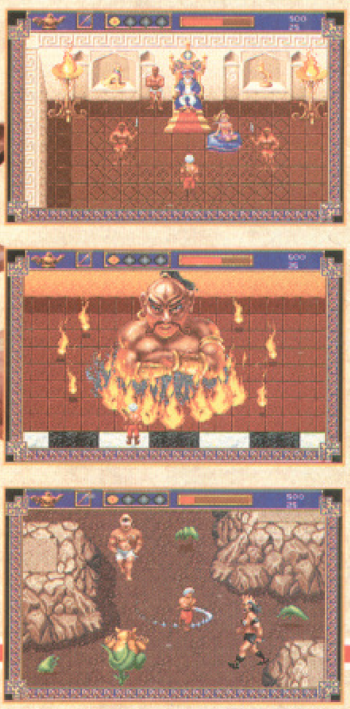

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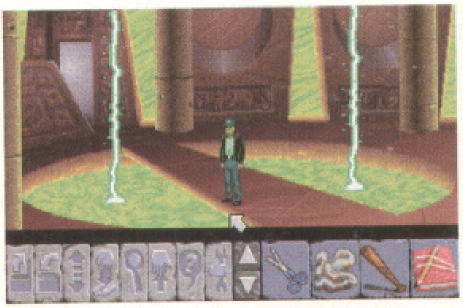
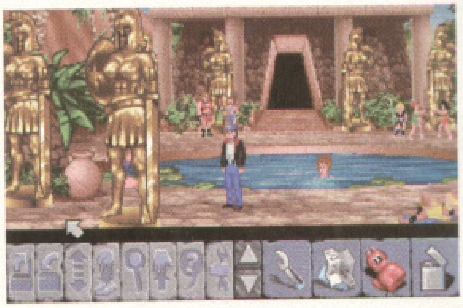
Flight of

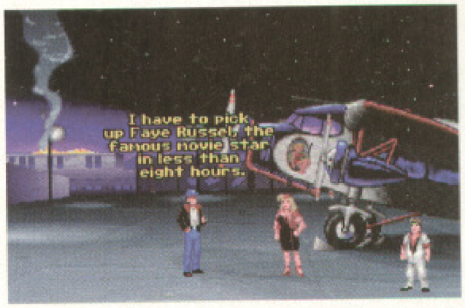
A graphic adventure that's a bit like Indiana Jones, you say? Alex Fraser pops out to lunch with Renegade to talk about a plane, a hero and an Amazon Queen.

GAME	FLIGHT OF THE AMAZON QUEEN
PUBLISHER	RENEGADE
DEVELOPER	Interactive Binary Illusions — John Passfield (programmer & co-writer); Steve Stamatiades (graphics & co-writer); Tony Ball (programming); Richard Joseph (sound).
WORK STARTED	APRIL 1991
DUE FOR COMPLETION	JULY 1994





Film references abound in Amazon Queen from the obvious Indiana Jones bits (above) to a subtle Casablanca type scene (bottom left). Of course, I could just be making this up....

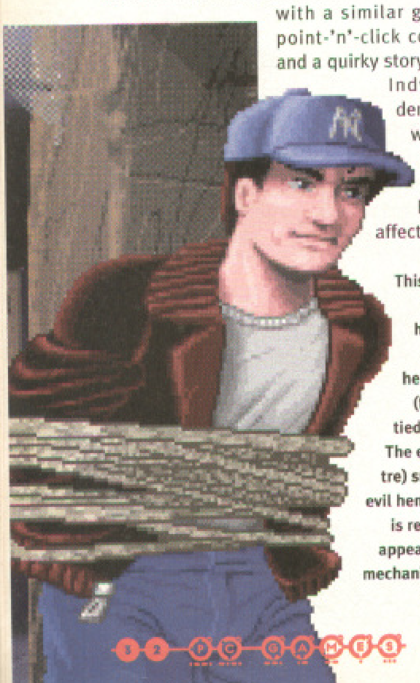


I have to pick up Faye Russell the famous movie star in less than eight hours.

Does anyone remember an old TV series called Tales Of The Golden Monkey? It starred a ruggedly handsome pilot, a gorgeous old seaplane, a mechanic and a girl, and each week they'd all fly into some sort of buttock-clenching danger trying to find some treasure and earn some cash.

No? Okay, how about this... Remember Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis? Yes, that's right — the LucasArts game. Of course you do. Well, Flight Of The Amazon Queen, a humourous graphic adventure from Australian design team Interactive Binary Illusions, is a bit like this. In fact, it's unashamedly a lot like this, with a similar graphic style, a point-'n'-click control interface and a quirky storyline. If you liked Indy, I can confidently say that you will love Flight Of The Amazon Queen.

FOTAQ, at it's affectionately become known in the Renegade office, is a graphic adventure set in the 1940s. You play pilot-for-hire Joe King (pun definitely intended — watch out for the gag "Are you Joe King?" "No, I'm being serious." Chuckle!), and your task is to fly the beautiful movie star Faye Russell into the heart of the Amazon rainforest for a photo shoot to promote her new film Jungle Passion.



This handsome chap is Joe King, pilot-for-hire. In the dramatic opening sequence, he and his young lady (far right) have been tied up in a warehouse. The evil henchmen (centre) snigger the way only evil henchmen can, and Joe is rescued by the timely appearance of Sparky the mechanic who falls through a hole in the roof...

It all sounds simple enough, but this innocent trip turns into a crazy story of B-movie proportions. Along the way you'll meet rival pilot Andersen (also known as the Flying Dutchman because he's Dutch and he, er, flies), some lost missionaries, a beautiful tribe of Amazon women, six-foot-tall Pygmies, Zombies and, of course, an evil scientist hell-bent on taking over the world. Oh, and there might just be some dinosaurs in there. And maybe a jetpack too...

So who are Interactive Binary Illusions? Well, IBI is a compact, bijou development team (there's three of them) based in Brisbane. John Passfield and Steve Stamatiades, the original team members, have been working flat out for three years trying to get the game finished, with Tony Ball joining after publisher Renegade became involved to assist with the programming.

> **"Monkey Island was a big influence. We really enjoyed it, we thought it was really funny."**
>
> **Steve Stamatiades, IBI.**

"Steve and I started it alone about two-and-a-half years ago," says John. "Steve was doing all the graphics which takes quite a while, especially since at the time we were programming the game part-time. A year ago we started with Renegade full-time which was when Tony joined us, but it's still an inordinate amount of work."

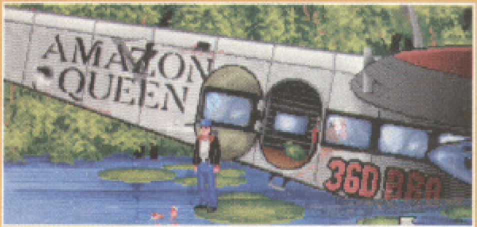
As you can see the visuals in the game are quite stunning (full 256-colour graphics and parallax scrolling) and if you ask Steve how many games he's done before this one he'll say "Er, none. Back in the 80s I had an Atari 800 and I used to do graphics on it," says Steve, "but there's no games industry in Australia — you can't just go and get a job. So I migrated into comics for a while and did a few animation courses."

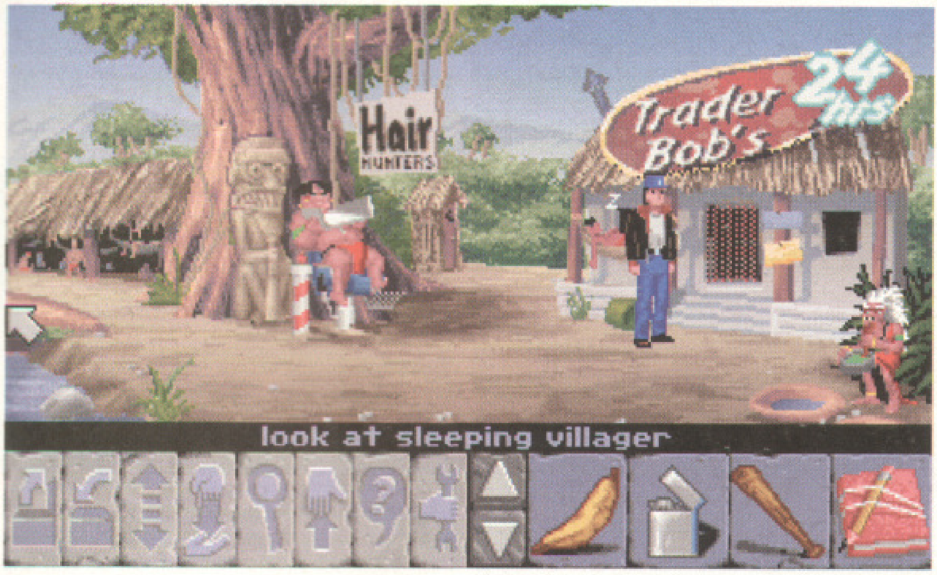
Steve and John have both previously worked together on comic books and weekly newspaper strips, and Dark Horse Comics have just snapped them up to produce a rip-roaring space adventure that might — or might not — be called Stereo Jack. Steve has also recently finished doing some of the animation for the forthcoming Sci-Fi movie, Fortress, starring Christopher 'Highlander' Lambert.

When you actually come to play through FOTAQ what strikes you immediately (apart from the graphics, of course) is the impressive quality of the scripting. Granted, with mad scientists, talking apes and lost valleys, the story sounds a bit corny and farcical, but the game has been written this way intentionally in order to create a classic B-movie feel.

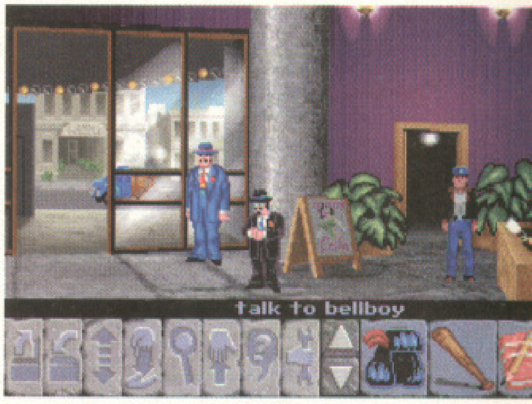
In fact, John and Steve have done themselves an enormous favour here, because by not taking the story seriously they can

fancy

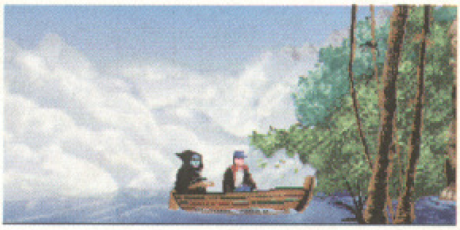


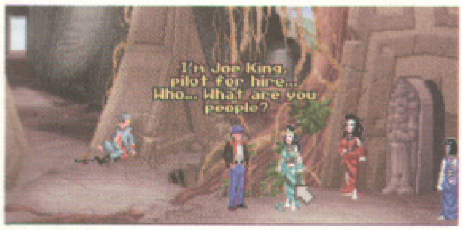


The Joe King universe is populated by all-manner of weird people from six foot tall Pgymies (above) to Zombies (left).



The graphics in FOTAQ are quite stunning and, although the game begins innocently enough, Joe is soon whisked to South America where he encounters beautiful women, lost apes and even the legendary Ferryman (below). Oh, and just in case you were wondering the Amazon Queen is the name of Joe's plane.





pack in all sorts of weird and bizarre elements. For example, the evil scientist Dr Ironstein has created a Dino-Ray which turns humans into dinosaurs, and his secret lab is hidden deep beneath an innocent-looking Lederhosen factory. It could almost be a storyline swiped from an old episode of Batman.

"The whole game is based around characterisation," explains Steve. "We wrote the story first, then worked out how many rooms we were going to have and what puzzles we wanted. We also tried to give each of the 40 characters very real personalities, so that the final game is a lot of fun with loads of humour.

"This is really what we want to do with games. It's more than just moving a character from A to B and solving puzzles. Amazon Queen has story, characterisation and tons of graphics. It's more like an interactive comic than a game."

As I've mentioned, FOTAQ bears more than a passing resemblance to a certain LucasArts adventure, but surprisingly Steve doesn't trot out the usual PR lines like "No, it's not really like a LucasArts game at all" or "We think it's better than Monkey Island". Steve was heavily influenced by games like Monkey Island and Fate Of Atlantis, as is obvious from the game's point-'n'-click interface and multiple-choice conversations.

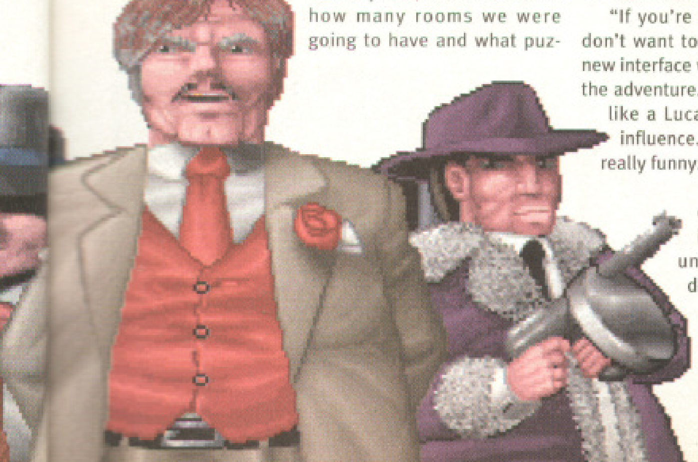
"If you're a real gamesplayer," says Steve, "you don't want to spend your spare time learning how a new interface works. You just want to sit down and play the adventure. That's why Amazon Queen is very much like a LucasArts game. Monkey Island was a big influence. We really enjoyed it, we thought it was really funny."

With lots of B-movie style cutaways, over 100 locations and an interactive iMUSE-style soundtrack, FOTAQ is quite unlike anything that Renegade has ever done before. The game will hopefully be released in two month's time, but already the bulk of it is complete.

IBI is going to hold onto the game, using the next couple of weeks to tweak and enhance it before nipping over to the UK for the recording of the CD version. Renegade plan to launch the disk and CD-ROM versions simultaneously, and naturally both Renegade and IBI are rightly bubbling over with enthusiasm.

Flight of the Amazon Queen looks, sounds and plays superbly, and promises to be both hugely funny and massively challenging. Packaged with a free 'Flight Of The Amazon Queen' novelty aeroplane, it's a quirky, strangely endearing game that has an Indy And The Fate Of Atlantis look but a definite Monkey Island feel.

But enough of me wittering on, because you can decide for yourself when the game eventually hits the shelves in July. I really can't tell you any more — it would spoil the plot. Honest.



come to the

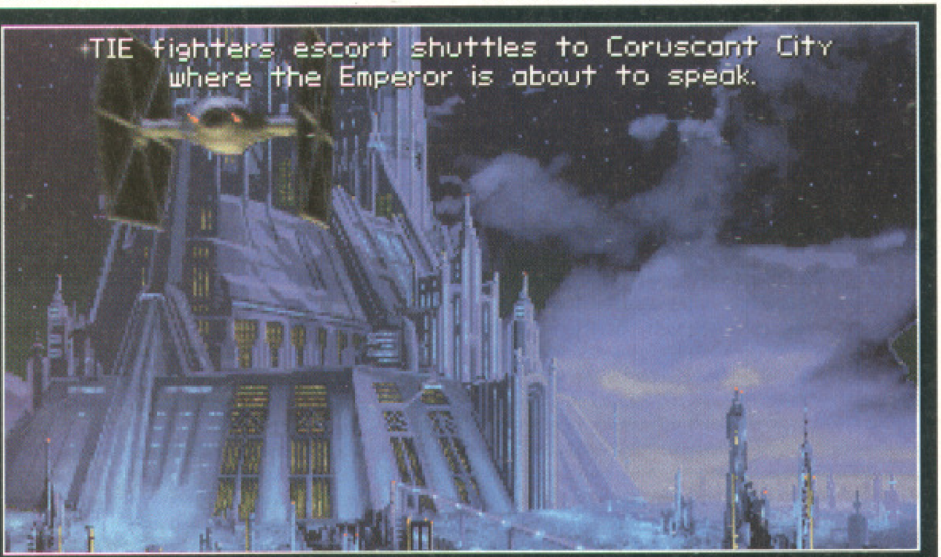
It must be one of the most eagerly awaited games of 1994. Dean Evans takes the No.23 bus to a galaxy far, far away to take a final look at the game people are already calling TIE Fighter.

Have you ever wanted to fly one of those fragile little TIE Fighters and blow goody-two shoes Rebel pilots into tiny, glistening splinters? Of course you have, and when LucasArts releases the eagerly awaited TIE Fighter next month you'll finally have your chance to join the Dark Side...

TIE Fighter, of course, is the sequel to the hugely successful X-Wing, and although at first glance the game looks little more than just an X-Wing rehash with prettier graphics and different spaceships, designers Lawrence Holland and Edward Kilham have gone back to the game designers drawing board, reversed the X-Wing perspective and enhanced both the graphics and the narrative story engines. Now you're one of the bad guys.

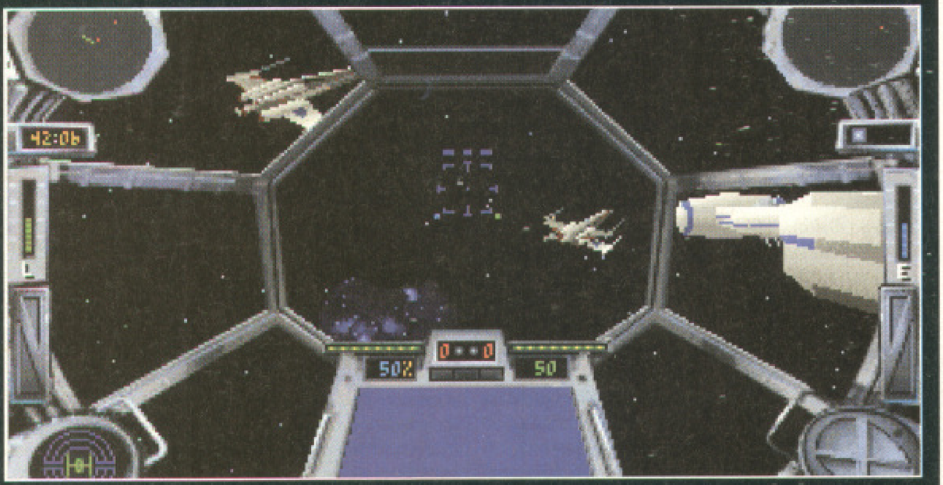
"This time you're flying for the Empire," explains Wayne Kline, TIE Fighter's project manager. "We're not trying to portray you as if you're evil — it's the war seen from the Empire's perspective. It's like the Rebellion is trying to destroy order in the galaxy and the Empire is the galactic police force who've got to stop them."

GAME	TIE FIGHTER
PUBLISHER	US GOLD
DEVELOPER	LucasArts — Wayne Kline (project manager); Lawrence Holland and Edward Kilham (design, programming); Peregrine Software (graphics, art, music and additional programming)
WORK *STARTED*	SEPTEMBER 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JUNE 1994

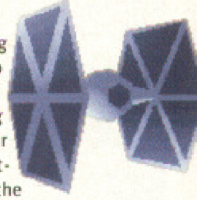


TIE fighters escort shuttles to Coruscant City where the Emperor is about to speak.

(Above) The Imperial Palace on Coruscant, home to the Emperor and seat of the Empire's power. It's not the sort of place you'd like to go to for a holiday.



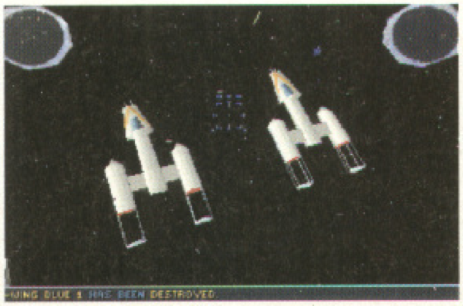
But what if you're a loyal X-Wing pilot? Is it going to be difficult to adjust to flying a TIE Fighter? How exactly do you feel about wearing that tight-fitting black body armour (I hear it chaffs around the buttocks)? Well, If you haven't played the demo, why not go away and do it now. Go on. Close the magazine, switch on your PC and try and get past those ace-pilots in the gold A-Wings...



Okay, so maybe adjusting to Imperial rule is easy — in fact, there are thousands of people in this country literally dribbling embarrassingly over the carpet in anticipation of it all. But the demo doesn't give you the full story. It's brilliant fun to play, but when I saw the game in mid-April it had advanced a whole lot further. Dare I say it, TIE Fighter looked even better.

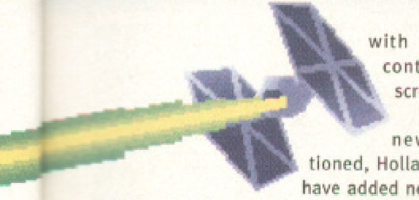
Now if I stop wibbling for a moment I'll try and put the game in some sort of perspective. TIE Fighter is set after the battle on Hoth portrayed in The Empire Strikes Back. As the Rebels evacuate the ice planet, the Empire attacks them in a series of huge, sweeping battles. As you can see the actual 3D combat part of the game has remained relatively unchanged — there's no point fixing something that isn't broken, is there? — but I can assure you there is a bucketload of new tweaks and refinements.

One of the first things that grabs your attention is the quality of the graphics. TIE Fighter uses the basic X-Wing polygon game engine, but this time Holland and Kilham have jazzed up the visual appeal with Gouraud shading. Like X-Wing the narrative story unfolds with the aid of cinematic sequences, and the whole game is packed with digitally mastered sound effects, digitised speech and a suitably dramatic iMUSE musical score that changes



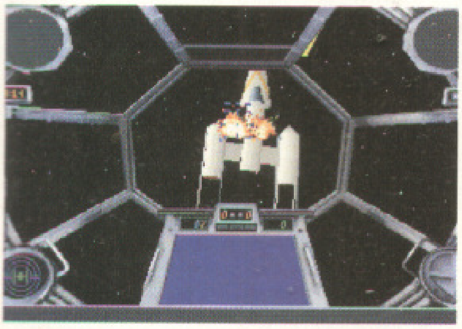
-WING BLUE 1 HAS BEEN DESTROYED

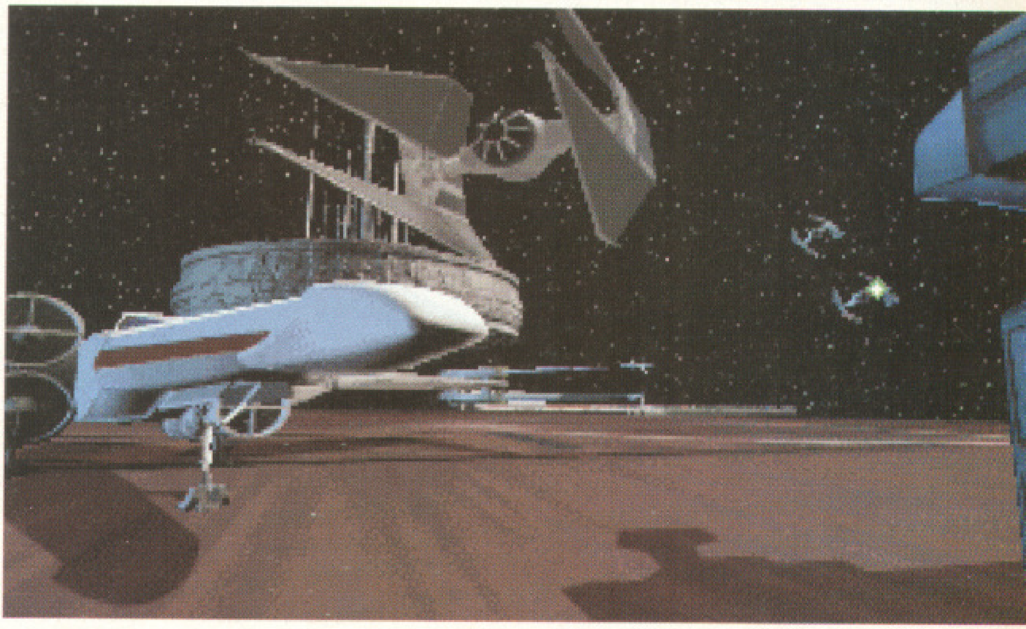
Dark Side

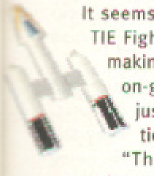


with the pace and content of the on-screen action.

As for those new bits I mentioned, Holland and Kilham have added new ships, interactive mission briefings and variable skill levels. "We're trying to address the problems that a lot of people had with X-Wing being very difficult," says Wayne Kline. "In response to this TIE Fighter has three skill levels; easy, medium and hard, to allow people who just want to load up and play to do just that... and now there are six ships to fly in the game: there's the TIE Fighter, TIE Bomber, TIE Interceptor, the Assault Gunboat, the Advanced TIE which is Darth Vader's ship and a new ship we've made up just for this game, unofficially called the TIE Deluxe..."







It seems that this time around the TIE Fighter team are very keen on making the player feel part of an on-going campaign rather than just flying a disjointed collection of missions.

"The missions are now a lot more three-dimensional," adds Holland, "and things can happen within the missions that can completely change the outcome. You can now call up support troops, you can reload, or you can rendezvous with the mothership. There are more orders you can give your wingmen, and they'll be smarter and more responsive so that you don't feel so much that you're doing all the work."

You see, in TIE Fighter each mission has multiple objectives. For example, you may be ordered to attack a repair platform and then find you're forced onto the defensive as a Rebel rescue force hyperspaces in on the counter attack. Beat the Rebels back and then you might have to rescue one of your own stricken cruisers, and so on.

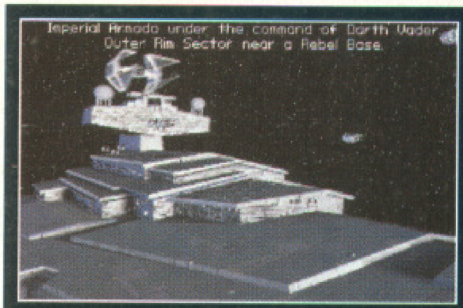
> "We're not trying to portray you as if you're evil — it's the war seen from the Empire's perspective."
>
> Wayne Kline, LucasArts.

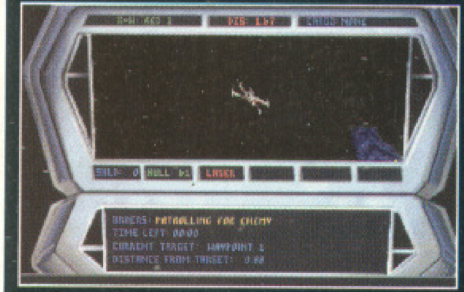
Because of this Holland and Kilham have also revamped the mission briefings, and in TIE Fighter you can have what amounts to an interactive 'conversation' with your commanding officer, asking him questions about your mission objectives.

I hope you're ready for a challenge because TIE Fighter plays much harder than X-Wing ever did (the TIE Fighter, for example, has no Hyperdrive or deflector shield). It's only when you fly for the other side that you get to realise just how frustratingly fast the A-Wings are and how those Y-Wings, if left unchecked, can cause a heck of a lot of damage to your fragile Correlian transports.

TIE Fighter is now only a month away from release and will come packaged with a companion book/novella stuffed full of technical information and illustrations of the Empire's hardware. You also won't have to wait very long for the data disks either, as LucasArts plan a TIE Fighter release frenzy, shipping two further campaign disks soon after the initial game launch.

I admit I was sceptical at first but TIE Fighter looks extremely impressive. It's a fact that if you loved X-Wing and go all misty-eyed at the sound of the famous Star Wars theme tune, then this is definitely a game you should start saving your money for. Okay, so on a very basic level it's like X-Wing with a TIE Fighter, but who's complaining? Anyone? No, I didn't think so.


Imperial Armada under the command of Darth Vader
Outer Rim Sector near a Rebel Base.


LASER
ORDERS: PATROLLING FOR ENEMY
TIME LEFT: 00:00
CURRENT TARGET: WAYPOINT 1
DISTANCE FROM TARGET: 0.00

(Top) Imperial ships attack a remote Rebel spacedock. TIE Fighter is chock full o' cut-scenes and animated sequences, which pop up from time to time to dramatise any key plot developments.

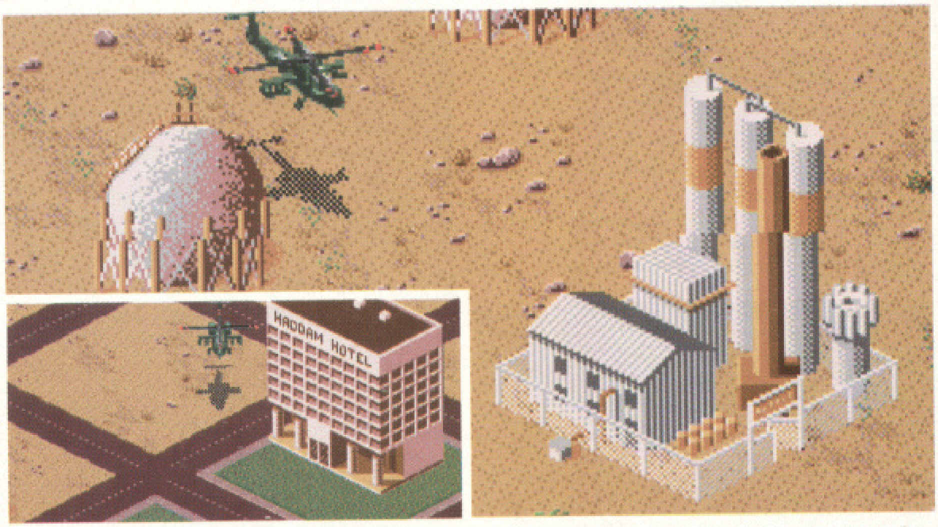
(Above middle) During missions you can return to your mothership for refuelling and re-arming.

(Above) In TIE Fighter you can target a particular craft and find out what it's doing, whether it's attacking, running away, how much damage it has sustained and what its armaments are.

Riders on

Already a huge hit on the Megadrive, Desert Strike is coming to your PC soon thanks to Gremlin. David Upchurch bungs some Wagner on the Hi-Fi and takes a look.

GAME	DESERT STRIKE
PUBLISHER	GREMLIN
DEVELOPER	Speedlink — Roger Taylor (project manager & programmer); Alex Metallis (main programmer); James Hartshorn (graphic artist).
WORK *STARTED*	OCTOBER 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JUNE 1994



You can't blame 'em. If I were boss of a big software company I'd probably do 'em as well — conversions, I mean. After all, if Alien Blasters IV was a huge public and critical smash on the Amiga, why shouldn't it do equally as well on the PC? It seems so logical, doesn't it? But, as has been proved all too often in the past, what's sauce for one machine's goose is not necessarily sauce for another machine's gander. Or something.

What I'm trying to say is that you've got every right to be slightly cynical when you're told that Desert Strike is a conversion. And you've got even more right when you learn that it's — horrors! — a conversion from the Megadrive console, home of tedious and derivative platform games.

However, on the basis of the work done so far, Desert Strike looks set to be the game that will make the term 'conversion' respectable again. And about time too.

Desert Strike originally appeared on the Megadrive over two years ago under the Electronic Arts banner. Via a licensing deal, however, it's Gremlin who'll be releasing the PC version, with developers Speedlink handling the actual coding chores.

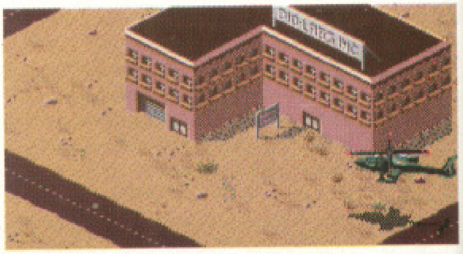
The game's age explains its blatantly Gulf War-inspired scenario. There's no point going into detail about the plot now (we'll save that for padding out the review next issue). Suffice it to say that there's trouble brewing in the Middle East, and the President of the You-Nighted States has sent in you and your Apache helicopter to sort out the whole messy business.

What this means in game terms is tons of fast-moving and exciting blasting action as you manouevre your stealthy chopper around the pseudo-3D landscapes, destroying tanks, rocket launchers and any other enemy hardware you encounter with your gunship's arsenal of cannons and missiles.

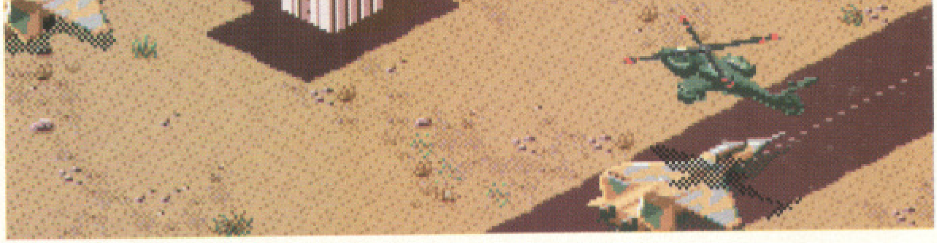
"Ho-hum, so it's a shoot-'em-up. Big deal," you mutter. Well, yes it is, but the game's much more than a simple exercise in how fast you can hammer a fire-button. Cunning strategy is needed to defeat even the most basic enemy installation, while the fact that your ammunition and fuel is in limited supply means you have prioritise frequently. Have you got enough missiles to take out that enemy bunker and complete the mission? Or would you be better off investing some fuel and time in scouting out an enemy ammo dump to plunder?

Speedlink's Alex Metallis, the man converting Desert Strike's code from Megadrive to PC, agrees: "In Desert Strike it's not simply a case of just flying around and shooting everything — there's a fair degree of thought required. If you don't plan your attacks carefully there's no way you'll be able to finish the game."

Alex been working on the conversion since last October and has achieved some wonderful results. Multi-directional scrolling is generally a bit ropey and slow on the PC, but Desert Strike's is superb, being

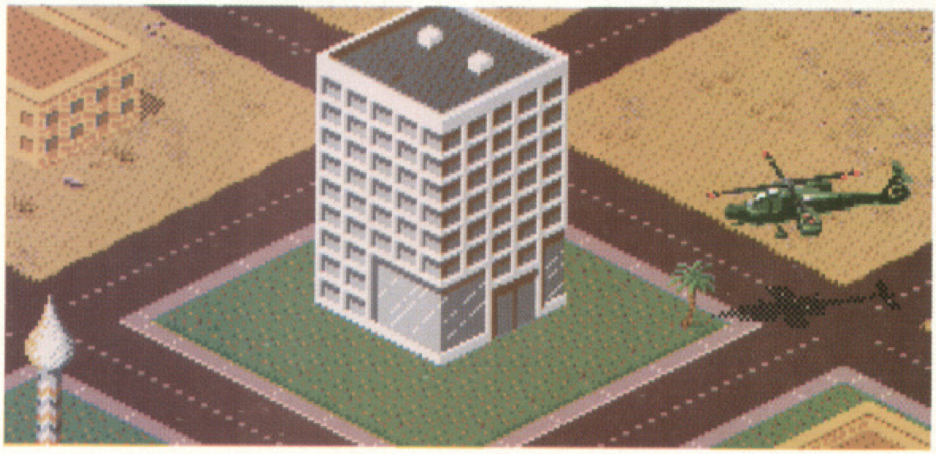


(Above) What is it about Desert Strike that makes it so much fun to play? "I think it's the game's sheer playability," says Alex, "that it's so easy to fly and manouevre your helicopter." And it would seem millions of Megadrive owners would agree with him, if the game's sales are anything to go by.



(Left) Here's a shot of you flying over an enemy airfield (as if you didn't know). If it all looks a little quiet at the moment, that's because Alex has yet to put the enemy sprites into the game. Rest assured that come the finished game, however, you won't be able to scoot around with such ease.

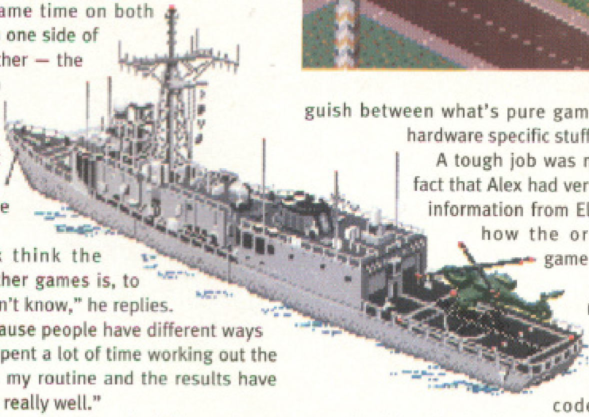
the storm



both fast and exceptionally smooth even on a low-powered machine.

"On the PC the game scrolls as well as it did on the Megadrive, if not better," reckons Speedlink's Roger Taylor, the man overseeing Desert Strike's coding (and not to be confused with Duran Duran's drummer). "Because the Megadrive had to occasionally download and decompact graphics from the cartridge the scrolling used to 'glitch' from time to time. You don't get that on the PC because you can store all the data in memory — the scroll stays dead smooth all the time."

"The key thing with a scrolling game is that you have a constant velocity," Roger adds. "In other words, if you have a 16MHz 386 and a 33MHz 486 both running Desert Strike side by side, then it'll take you the same time on both machines to fly from one side of a level map to the other — the difference is that on the slower machine the scroll will be 'coarser', because it hasn't got the power to update the screen so often."



Why does Alex think the scroll in so many other games is, to be blunt, crap? "I don't know," he replies. "I guess it's just because people have different ways of approaching it. I spent a lot of time working out the mathematics behind my routine and the results have fortunately come out really well."

Compared to the scrolling, the 3D effect — whereby the helicopter can fly 'behind' buildings and other landscape features — was relatively easy to achieve.

"It wasn't so hard to do," claims Alex. "You just prioritise the order in which things are printed, so that you draw objects at the 'back' of the screen first and things at the 'front' of the screen last. There are things you can do to optimise the code, like not drawing things that are totally obscured by other objects, but that's the basic theory behind it."

> **"If you don't plan your attacks carefully there's no way you'll be able to finish the game."**
>
> Alex Metallis, Programmer of Desert Strike.

Since the Megadrive and PC have almost completely different hardware set-ups, converting Desert Strike hasn't exactly been a straight-forward job.

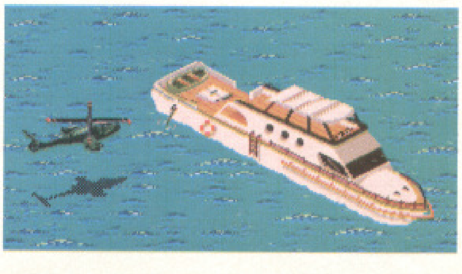
"Things like the sprite movement, scrolling and so on are handled by Megadrive's custom graphics hardware so that has to be totally coded for the PC from scratch," explains Roger, "but things like the game logic are fairly transportable — although obviously you've got to convert the code [because the Megadrive and PC have different processors] and optimise it."

"The difficulty about it is that you have to distinguish between what's pure game logic and what's hardware specific stuff," adds Alex.

A tough job was made harder by the fact that Alex had very little in the way of information from Electronic Arts about how the original Megadrive game was put together.

"We had no documentation at all," sighs Alex. "The only thing we had was the Megadrive code which had comments in it but that's about it. We had some graphics as well, but they'd been compacted in a really weird way and it took us about a month to work out how to get at them!"

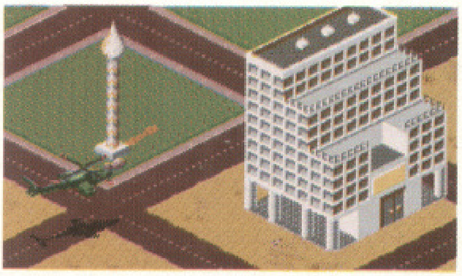
The game's now only a month or so away from completion and most of the coding is complete, with only a few tweaks to be made here and there. The biggest headache that lies ahead is enhancing the Megadrive's 64-colour graphics to take full advantage of the PC's 256-colour palette. "We're still using a mixture of Megadrive and Amiga graphics just for development," says Roger.



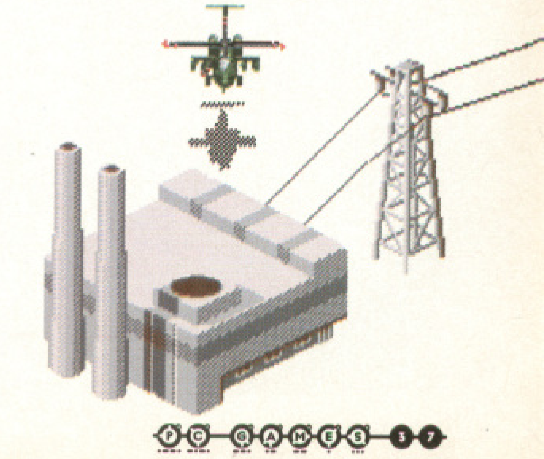
It's all shaping up very nicely that's for sure, and Desert Strike looks set to be as successful on the PC as it was on the Megadrive. But don't take my word for it, because if you tune in to the next issue of PC GAMES you'll be able to find out how good the game is for yourself by playing our EXCLUSIVE demo.

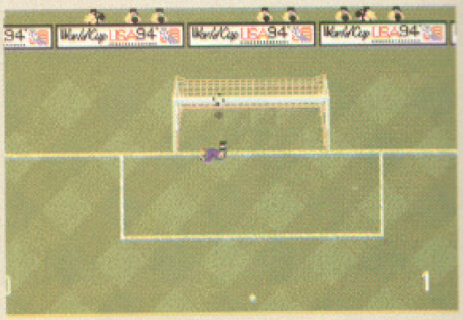
"It was always my intention to makes the game as smooth and as playable as it was on the Megadrive," says Alex. "I'm pretty pleased with the results."

And so he should be.



With the game only a month or two from completion, the team are delighted with what they've achieved. "Desert Strike PC is easily as playable as the Megadrive version," says Roger.



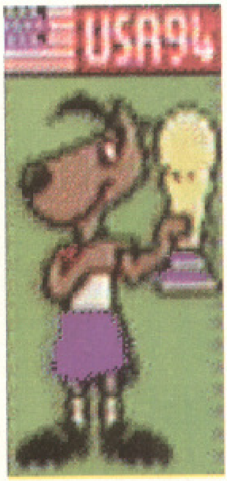


They're on the *Pitch...*

Poised to leap simultaneously onto eight computer formats, World Cup USA '94 looks like being US Gold's biggest license of the year. Dean Evans shouts rude things at the ref and watches from the cheap seats.

Game	World Cup USA '94
Publisher	US Gold
Developer	US Gold — Tony Bickley (project manager); Tiertex Ltd (graphics, music, sound effects and programming).
Work *started*	November 1993
Due for *completion*	June 1994

This year the glamour-soaked FIFA World Cup roadshow unpacks its bags and sets out its stall in the good ol' US of A. Birmingham-based US Gold have the official 'game of the game' license and come the beginning of June, World Cup USA '94 will dive dramatically onto PC screens across the country.



Unsurprisingly, World Cup USA '94 is based entirely around the forthcoming World Cup tournament, and the game allows the player to take control of any one of the 24 qualifying teams and lead them to the dizzy, tear-jerking heights of World Cup glory. And that's not the half of it, either. The game is highly flexible and you can alter just about anything you want.

"With World Cup USA 1994 we wanted to achieve three main criteria," explains Tony Bickley, the game's producer. "We wanted it to play the best game of football in the world, we wanted it to be the most user-friendly game in the world and we wanted it to have the most customisable features in the world."

As a result, Tony and coding team Tiertex have developed a game which you can tweak and change to your heart's content. Apart from the official 1994 World Cup competition the game allows you to play friendly matches and hold practice sessions, and also features a powerful suite of editors that enable you to change the teams (swap Malta for England, nobody will notice), the draw, the formations and to add numerous special plays.

"By far the most powerful feature is the special play menu," enthuses Tony. "This allows you to preset up to 15 individual moves. You can then access and edit these plays and use them in the matches. We wanted the player to be able to dummy his opponent by calling up a special play, and there are four that you can use within the game at any time. It makes the game that bit more exciting if your opponent doesn't know what you're up to."

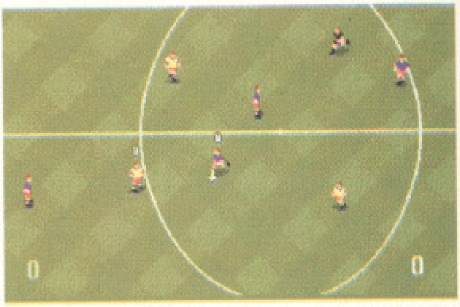
For example, if you want to pre-program a free kick, you could construct a play where two players dummy a move over the ball while a third tries to swerve it round the defensive wall. The possibilities are only limited by your tactical flair. World Cup USA '94 also lets you customise your throw-ins, corners and penalties as well.

The PC doesn't have a stunning track record when it comes to football games (Sensible Soccer being the obvious exception) but World Cup USA '94 is shaping up nicely and is extremely playable. The game is highly flexible and can be played either as a simple arcade kick-about or a fully-fledged simulation, but the emphasis is, of course, on playability and US Gold have opted for a fairly traditional top-down graphic viewpoint. The game's arcade feel is reinforced by its lack of text, icon control system and the numerous animated appearances of Striker the dog, the USA '94 mascot.

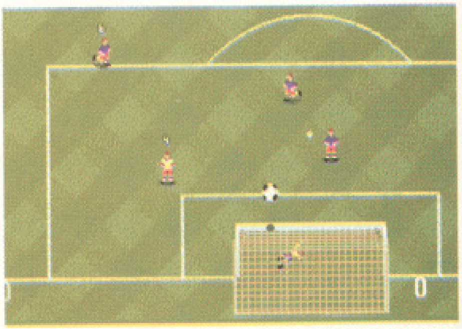
"World Cup is extremely simple to use," burbles Tony. "It's got a very intuitive play system. When you do a volley it automatically uses a preset sequence of animations. If the ball is just in front of you, you'll do a normal kick, if it's slightly ahead you'll do a diving volley and if it's slightly behind you'll perform an overhead scissors kick. In World Cup you get all the pretty graphics without having to worry about complex joystick movements. You just do it."

With passes, back heels, side flicks, fouls, injuries and a wealth of statistical info, even at this early stage World Cup USA '94 looks very impressive indeed. US Gold tell us that it should be released in time for the start of the World Cup on June 17th, and if it actually delivers all the features and playability that it promises, I see no real reason why it shouldn't sell by the bucketload.

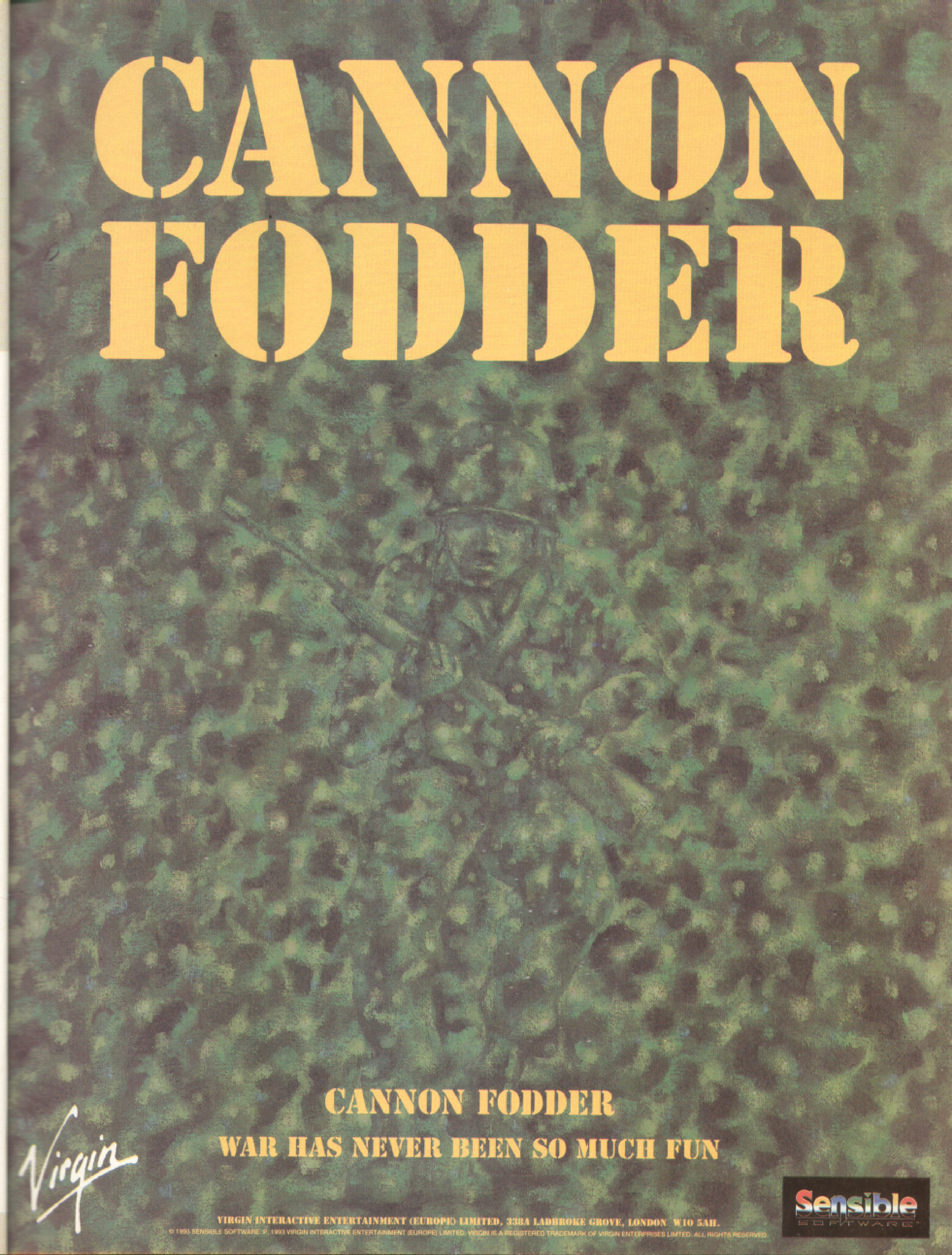
But we'll just have to wait and see, won't we?



World Cup USA '94 uses the traditional top-down viewpoint to give the player a clear angle on the action, but the players are big enough to be sufficiently detailed.



Say ooh ah Cantona, say ooh ah Cantona... One nil, one nil, one niiiiiiilll... In World Cup, realism is the watchword. For example, if you brutally foul a player while the ref is turned away there's a 90% chance he won't spot it.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Hooray For *Hollywood?*

As **movies** try to be like **games** and **games** desperately try to be like **movies, Dean Evans** goes star spotting wondering whether this whole 'interactive movie' thing is a good idea...

IMAGINE THE FUTURE OF THE CD GAME... IT'S 1997 AND ANTHONY HOPKINS, Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington have all been nominated for Best Actor In An Animated Computer Adventure Game category. Sean Connery has just won Best Supporting Actor for his captivating performance as Daltana in Captive 4, while Meg Ryan has scooped the Best Actress statuette for her role as the luckless Princess Stephanie in the blockbuster Kings Quest 9.

So maybe this is a touch far-fetched, but with veteran actors like Tim Curry and Donald Sutherland now lending their thespian talents to adventure games it's not as fanciful as you might think. Okay, Tom Cruise hasn't started pestering Electronic Arts for the script to its next computer game (not as far as I know, anyway) but software companies are finally beginning to realise the value of employing big-name actors to add realism to their games.

The here and now

Of course, people have been talking about the movie/computer game crossover for some time, but while the much vaunted 'interactive movie' is proving to be about as interactive as a multiple choice quiz, the CD-based 'talkie' adventure, in which the game's characters actually talk to you (hence the nickname), is going from strength to strength.

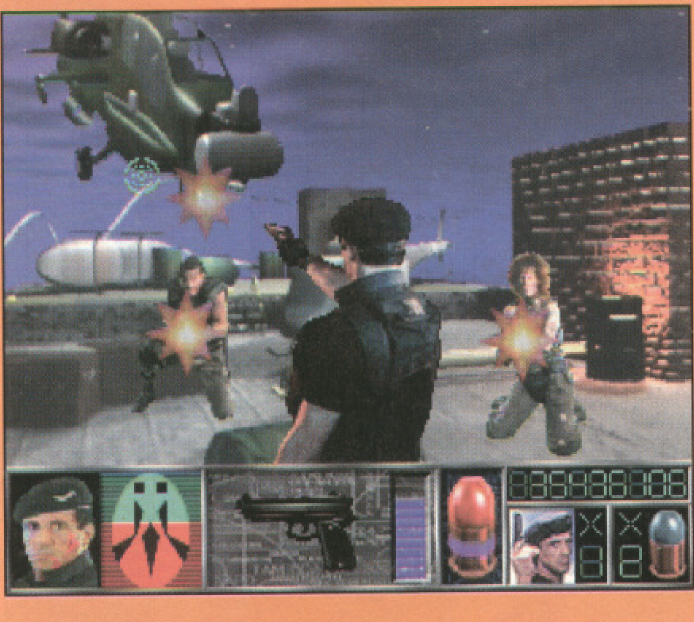
The 'talkie' itself was created back in 1992 when LucasArts stripped out the text from the Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis CD and replaced it with digitised voice-overs. Despite the absence of Harrison Ford and the inclusion of some extremely dodgy german accents — "Vot! Vy are you giving me zees knick-knacks?" — the game was a monster success. In fact Indy is probably the catalyst that kick-started the current talkie revolution.

With CD games now costing millions of dollars to develop (The 7th Guest was rumoured to have cost over $4m), software companies are now going to great lengths to sign up major acting names. Gone are the days when you could get away with grabbing Jim from the postroom and Tracey from the canteen and make do with them as your star 'vocal talents'. Now few publishers can resist the glamour of using professional voice-overs, digitised actors and all manner of movie-style techniques. It adds much needed credibility to a game and if you've cast a well-known star in your latest blockbuster adventure, it will probably bump up your sales by a couple of thousand to boot. Which, at the end of the day, is what it's all about

> "Fundamentally, film and interactive entertainment are two very different entertainment experiences."
> **Randy Komisar, President of LucasArts**

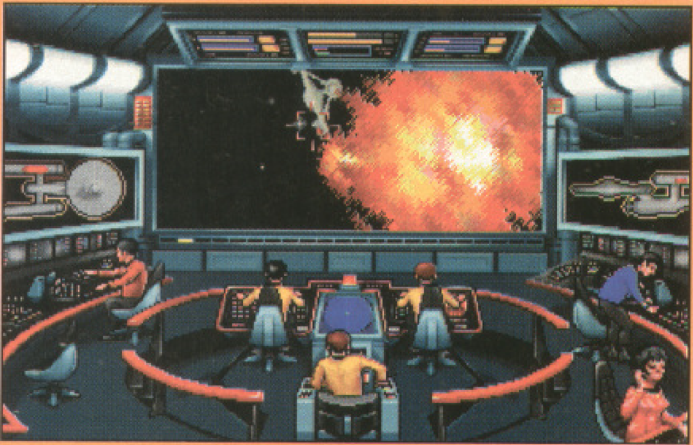
Right now there are dozens of games in production that boast big-name stars in their cast lists. Chris Barrie, star of Red Dwarf, The Brittas Empire and that completely annoying Jif Micro Liquid advert, has just finished recording the lead part of Simon in Adventuresoft's acclaimed Simon the Sorcerer, while Donald Sutherland (star of more films than I can possibly mention) recently put on a thoroughly convincing Russian accent to play a Soviet dissident and narrator in Virgin's CD adventure, Conspiracy.

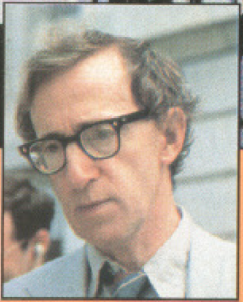
Patrick Stewart (Jean Luc Picard from Star Trek: TNG) can currently be heard voicing the narrative to Sierra's Lands Of Lore, and he, Michael Dorn and the rest of the TNG cast have been signed up to provide the voices on MicroProse's forthcoming CD adventure, Star Trek: The Next Generation.

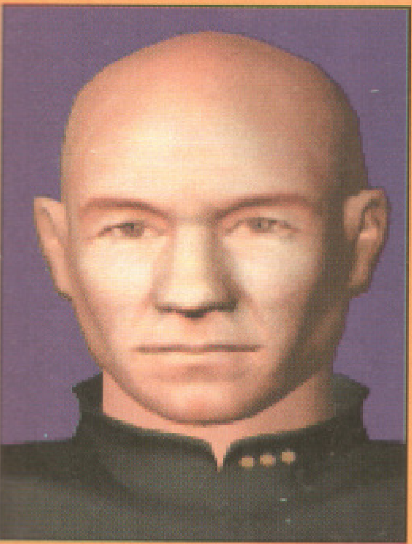


(Left & above) Using the latest Chromakey film techniques, not only can you watch Sly on the big screen, wear the T-Shirt and buy the lunchbox, but now you can move him about, dive and blast the bad guys. Okay, it looks like a movie but left, right and shoot isn't really interactive.

> "The 'interactive movie' won't happen for a long time. Interactivity isn't just watching a piece of video and then making a 'Yes/No' decision. For me, an interactive movie is something like the holodeck in Star Trek..."
> **Martin Kenwright, Boss of DID**







(Top) Live the 60's Star Trek experience with Interplay's superb Star Trek CD.
(Above) Tim Curry adopts a New Orleans drawl for Sierra's star-studded Gabriel Knight (left).

(Above) Will famous actors and actresses flock to appear in PC CD games? Just how much would it cost to hire Woody Allen to play Bernard in Day Of The Tentacle?

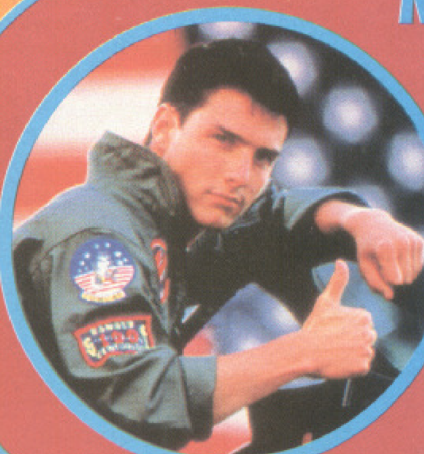
(Left) Patrick Stewart provides the voice for his uncannily life-like 3D model in MicroProse's Star Trek: The Next Generation. Built up from hundreds of tiny polygons, the TNG characters promise to have bags more versatility compared with digitised video. You want to be able to 'play' a game. If you want to sit and watch, rent a video...

But, in what must be the marketing coup of the decade, Interplay have managed to enlist the original Star Trek cast (William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley and the rest of the Enterprise 'crew') to provide the voices for the CD version of Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary. With the original cast onboard, the game becomes infinitely better — it's almost like watching an old episode on TV, but without the dodgy sets.

One of the most eagerly awaited releases is Digital Image Design's Inferno. Due out later this year, the CD version promises to have full speech throughout, with the hero played by an as-yet-unnamed classical actor. "Computers are now in vogue," suggests Martin Kenwright, DID's director. "People, especially actors, are taking the idea a lot more seriously. They're actually quite keen."

But probably the most successful talkie so far has been Sierra's Gabriel Knight, a voodoo adventure that has enlisted the talents of veteran actors Tim Curry (The Rocky Horror Picture Show, The Hunt for Red October, Home Alone 2), Mark 'Luke Skywalker' Hamill (Star Wars, Slipstream and, er, some other things probably) and Michael Dorn (currently appearing as Worf in Star Trek: TNG).

MPEG, ReelMagic & VideoCD



The PC isn't powerful enough to run full-screen, real-time video images on its own (it hasn't got the 'oomph' to maintain a decent frame rate). So, to achieve the TV-quality display game developers need, they are forced to squash the video into a much smaller screen area.

Playing a game in such a dinky window can be highly frustrating – it's often difficult to see exactly what's going on. But now MPEG has come to the rescue. MPEG stands for Motion Pictures Experts Group and is the industry compression standard for video images. What MPEG does is crunch down the video data by a huge amount, up to 200:1. In its compressed format (blocks of 150Kb) the data then fits easily within the transfer rate of your CD-ROM drive and so all the PC has to do is oversee the data transfer, then put its feet up.

It's simple and with the addition of a card like Sigma Design's ReelMagic, you can have TV-quality images running on your PC at 30 frames a second and in 32,768 colours.

MPEG compression has also created a whole new video format – VideoCD. The idea here is simply to put movies onto a compact disc and even now, if you have a CD-i player or a ReelMagic card, you can watch Top Gun, Patriot Games and many more. Make it a VideoCD night.

> "We [Forte] have been developing our own three-axis tracking technologies for several years with the sole aim of producing a mass-market Virtual Reality system for the PC."
> **Paul Travers,**
> **President of Forte Technologies.**

With over 7,300 lines of recorded dialogue, amounting to more than three feature-length film scripts, Gabriel Knight is a stunning example of how voice-overs should be done. Script and graphics aside, it's a thoroughly well-acted game and playing it you cannot help being taken in by the southern drawl of Tim Curry's Gabriel and Mark Hamill's weary police officer. In Gabriel Knight the stars grab the limelight and the verbal narrative takes full control. Of course I'm no drama critic but with the way CD adventures seem to be heading, I might just have to start.

Can you imagine it...? Many magazines already award marks for things like graphics and playability, but in the future they could also be marked on the strength of an actor's performance. "Oh, I thought Kenneth Branagh was just wonderful in that Frankenstein platform adventure..." "No, no I thought De Niro upstaged him as the monster, he put real passion into his growls, true feeling into his snarls..." It could all get way out of hand.

As for the future, well, LucasArts are known to writing a Star Wars graphic adventure. I wonder if they could hire the original cast to do the voices? Getting Harrison Ford back as Han mighty be tricky but Chewbacca and R2-D2 should be easy, and I'm sure Anthony 'C-3Po' Daniels and Carrie Fisher could be persuaded, while Mark Hamill has already brought his talents to bear on Gabriel Knight. Just imagine it, a whole new Star Wars adventure with all the original voices... Now that would be something. (Calm down, Dean — Ed.)

And then there's F.M.V.

Yes, what about Full Motion Video? Well, apart from the batch of talkie games currently in production, games developers are still quite keen on producing games that use digitised video footage of actors.

Despite the fact that the acting in titles featuring FMV has often been dreadful and the gameplay has been disappointing, with the inclusion of major acting talent developers still hope that this elusive interactive, movie-like feel can be created. Writer Aaron Connors of Access said of their forthcoming Under A Killing Moon project: "People don't view it as a kid's thing. We put the game into the same category of entertainment as the novel, movies and so on."

Indeed, after Activision's Return To Zork and Software Toolworks' MegaRace, Under A Killing Moon promises to be the next big FMV development. It's a detective story starring Brian Keith (Young Guns and several US TV series) and Margot Kidder (best remembered for her role as Lois Lane opposite Christopher Reeves' Superman). Using the latest 'Chromakey' filming techniques and high-resolution backgrounds, Under A Killing Moon is state-of-the-art stuff, a game that's proving to be so enormously huge it will ship later this year on at least two CDs.

Employing expensive high-calibre actors in a game this ambitious is an investment well worth making according to the game's huge team of creators. "The professionals we used in Killing Moon could interpret the role themselves," said Chris Jones, Under A Killing Moon's producer. "Often we abandoned our own expectations because the actor's delivery was so much better."

In this the start of a trend? Can I see a bandwagon just waiting to be jumped on? It's true the computer industry is going through a period of massive growth and even the big film studios like MCA/Universal, MGM and Disney realise the potential. Sony bought out Psygnosis last May, MCA has just acquired a slice of Interplay and even Steven Spielberg is getting in on the act with a CD game for LucasArts called The Dig. George Lucas of course, has been right in on the ground floor from the start. Where will it all end? Will Clint Eastwood want to direct the PC version of Mad Dog Macree? Will Macauley Culkin throw himself off a cliff in Lemmings: The Interactive Movie? Let's hope so.

The burning question is whether all this industry cross-over is a good idea. Production costs on games are already soaring and developers are already holding casting sessions to decide who should play their pixel heroes.

Before we know it a top-notch CD adventure will have a Director, an Art Director, a Music Director, all sorts of designers, technicians and musicians, graphic artists stolen from the comic industry, a voice coach plus fifty actors. Add ten minutes of full-motion video footage and you can throw in a make-up artist, wardrobe department, Key Grip, a fluffer, a Best Boy (what do they actually do?)... The list could go on and on.

The interactive movie: Brilliant or crap?

Ah yes, the interactive movie. It seems that this simple phrase has inspired programmers almost to the point of obsession; it has become some sort of game designer's Holy Grail. Computer games, it is said, should look and feel like a film but you, the player, should be able to control the outcome. It's a nice idea.

Unfortunately it's practically unworkable. Just as movies are trying to move towards interactivity, it appears that games are moving slowly the other way. Once they had oodles upon oodles of gameplay but now, if the trend continues, they will move gently towards a more passive, movie-like style. Games like The 7th Guest look gorgeous but their interactivity boils down to little more than choosing a different plot 'path' or taking a simple 'Yes/No' decision.

Even with 64-bit processors, MPEG and quad-speed CD drives, these pre-pro-

There's no 'Yes/No' branching type guff in Inferno. No sir. The game uses narrative 'cut-scenes' to give you that elusive 'I'm playing a movie' feel and allows you to fly anywhere and shoot anything in a huge solar system. Not a badly digitised video clip in sight. Phew.

Chromakey Filming

Games like MegaRace, Under A Killing Moon (pictured left) and Return To Zork achieve their FMV effects using Chromakey filming techniques. A Chromakey shoot involves filming an actor in front of a totally blue or green background and then digitising the footage. Next the graphic artist 'cuts out' the actor and tidies up the image to smooth out any pixellated edges. When this has been done for each frame, the artist can overlays the final image onto the desired game background.

With the games industry and the movie industry edging closer and closer together, film studios are already starting to shoot extra footage for the 'game-of-the-film' when they shoot the actual movie. This has already happened with the 3DO game of Sylvester Stallone's Demolition Man which uses the above Chromakey technique to allow you to control Sly himself.

"Gabriel Knight is very entertaining," says Mark Hamill. "The story line itself is very sophisticated. It's the kind of story you'd see in a feature film."

Veteran Hollywood actor Donald Sutherland brings a touch of class to Conspiracy. We especially like the big, bushy beard — very 'in character'. Nice one, Don.

Tim Curry's all for this talkie CD business. "You can sit in your own home and make your own movie, which is very cool to me," he says. He probably thinks it's 'fab' too.

Chris Barrie, who's done more voice-overs for telly ads than I've had, er, caviar, is lending his enormous vocal talents to the CD version of AdventureSoft's Simon The Sorceror.

grammed routes can never translate into true interactivity. Okay, the storage of a CD-ROM disk is immense (about 600Mb) but to be truly interactive a game would have to feature multiple plot branches for each and every character decision. Before you know it you have millions and millions of possible game options. Provide video footage for each path and you'd have to shoot the equivalent of forty feature films.

Pre-recorded video as used in Return To Zork and Under A Killing Moon can never really give the gamesplayer true interactivity. There is no real control. You can't just record your favourite actor moving about and then expect to control him. The closest you'll probably get to doing this will be in the forthcoming Star Trek: TNG from MicroProse.

As these virtual characters are built up from hundreds and hundreds of polygons which are then lovingly texture-mapped, the versatility remains. While digitised footage of actors may well have the 'Wow' factor that TNG lacks, the player mostly 'watches' the story unfold. If gaming is going to be passive why pay ú50 for a so-called interactive movie when you can go and rent a video for ú2?

"If you're in the mood to sit back and watch a story unfold, then you can watch a movie," agrees Randy Komisar, President of LucasArts. "Or maybe you want to engage your imaginations in a first-person experience. Perhaps you want to be in an X-Wing facing a squadron of fighters, or an Indiana Jones searching for a lost artifact. In that case you can play a game. We watch movies and we play games. Therein lies the difference between film and interactive entertainment today."

So what's the way forward? Perhaps the best way to achieve the interactive movie idea! is by taking the structure of an adventure game and using digitised actors instead of cartoon sprites. Take something like Day Of The Tentacle, for example. You could replace Bernard with Woody Allen (or Chris Evans if he dyed his hair black), Rosanna Arquette could play Laverne and John Goodman would be perfect to play the brain-fried Hoagie. Slap in some high-res backgrounds, add a digital soundtrack and — hey-presto! — one interactive movie.

Virtual reality

To find this elusive movie feel we may have to delve into the realms of Virtual Reality, but this could be a whole new article in itself. Imagine X-Wing in VR? With a 360-degree field of vision you could watch a TIE Fighter as it howls past the cockpit; locate enemies by sight rather than radar in a full 3D gaming world. Add 3D sound and you've got one hell of a game on your hands.

Getting a true movie feel doesn't mean you have to blow half your game's production costs on big-name actors. By all means hire a band to do the soundtrack and some actors to provide the voices, but interactive movies should make you the star, not some digitised Hollywood has-been you can't even control. Video footage should enhance a game, not be the central part of it.

Although CD games like Gabriel Knight will hopefully take gaming to new levels of realism, I have my doubts about CD and the interactive movie. Obviously any game that uses FMV and Hollywood actors will always intrigue and excite non-games players and people who come to them from a pure movie background. But as for us gamers, we'll probably end up disappointed because, inevitably, beneath a game's flash visuals and digital soundtrack, there'll be a little neon sign blinking "No gameplay here".

Despite high ideals and good intentions it doesn't look like the game and the movie will ever truly meet. I hope that more big-name actors are drafted in to do adventure voice-overs but I remain massively skeptical about the interactive movie. I'd love to be disproved but if, like me, The 7th Guest bored you rigid and you long for a little more interactivity in your games than a "Ooh, shall I go left or right?" dilemma then don't touch anything that claims to be an 'interactive movie' with a barge pole.

At least, not yet.

VIRTUALITY
VIRTUALITY
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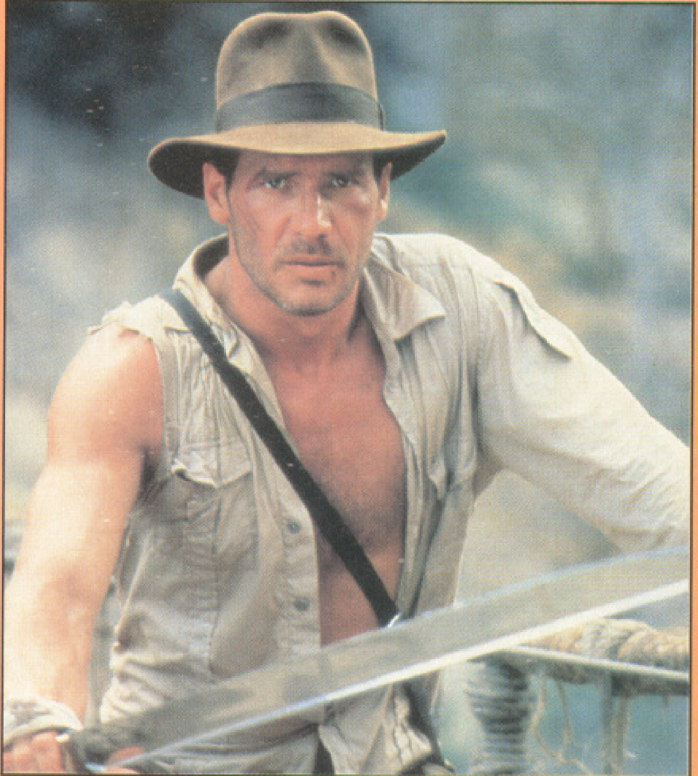

(Left) Maybe this whole 'Interactive Movie' thing lies down the same road as VR? Although sitting in a plastic chair with two TV screens clamped over your eyes may not sound too thrilling, if software companies can jack up the resolution to TV standards you could take part in the Death Star assault, flee from Jurassic Park or even join Indy (above) in the Temple of Doom.

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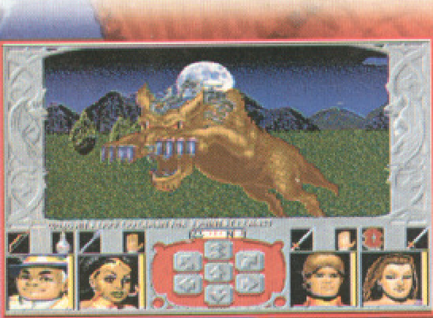

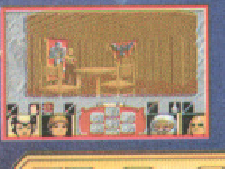

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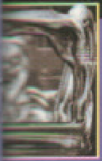
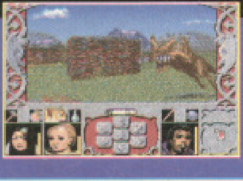
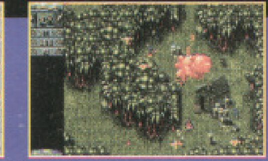
reviews

MonitorMan™

Phew-ie! Over the page you'll find 30 — yes, THIRTY — games cut open and gutted like a fish, ready for your inspection. Bet you can't wait to get stuck in...



Reviewed On Disk

Cannon Fodder	Virgin	64
Carriers At War 2	Electronic Arts	81
Civilization For Windows	MicroProse	55
Diggers	Millennium	82
Doofus	Prestige Software	85
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Reviewed On CD

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Star Trek	Interplay	59

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO...

Everyone at PC GAMES is a complete gaming nut. That's why we know exactly what you want to see in a game review (or so we like to think).

So what do you get?

Well, you get all the info you need and no waffling — we get straight to the point. On top of that you get loads of big screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features — after all a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type in the 'It's A Bit Like...' panel. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact 'phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum machine specification we recommend to get the game running at a decent, playable rate, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

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THE ***GOOD...***

- Inspired and fantastically addictive mix of blasting and puzzle solving.
- Hugely playable thanks to the elegant and well-implemented control system.
- Packed with humour and some hilarious — though some might say sick — animations.

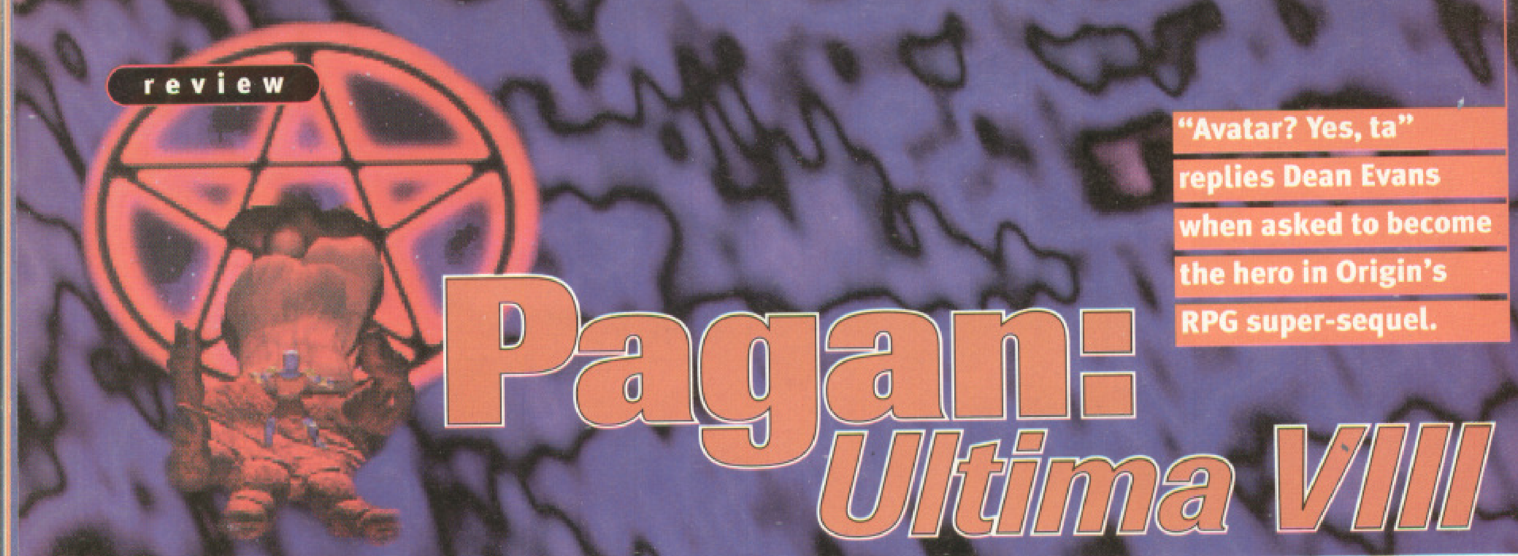
...AND THE ***BAD***

- Does get very demanding in the later missions, both mentally and physically.

OVERALL

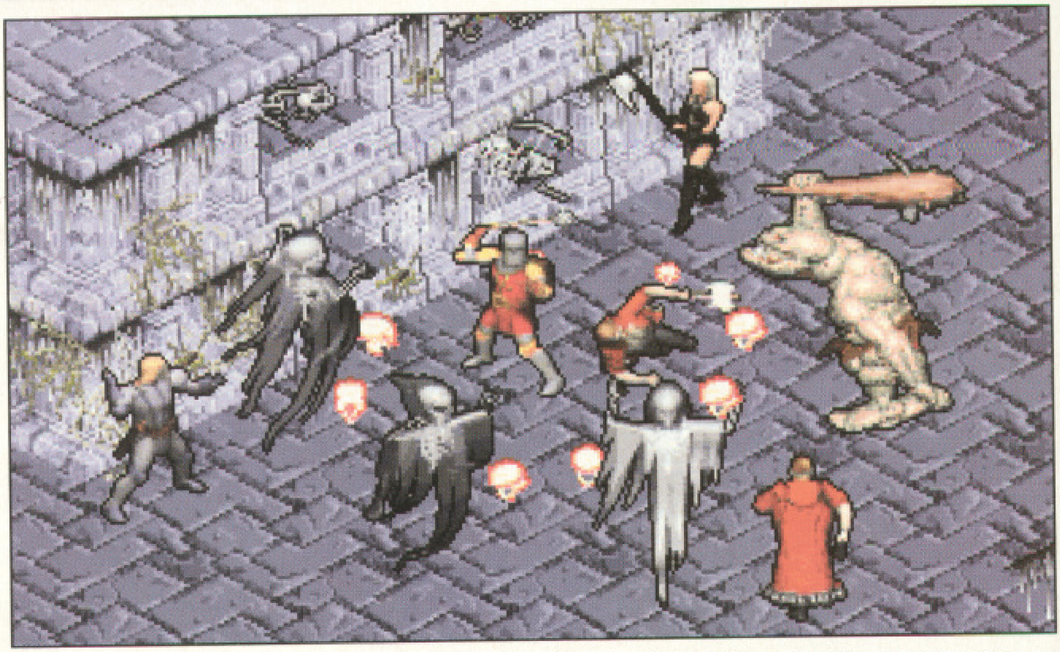
92%

The coveted PC GAMES STAR is awarded to any game scoring 90% or over, indicating that the game in question is an essential addition to any gamesplayer's software collection.



Pagan: Ultima VIII

"Avatar? Yes, ta" replies Dean Evans when asked to become the hero in Origin's RPG super-sequel.



The Avatar's life expectancy is getting shorter and shorter by the minute. Very rarely do things get this drastic in U8, but when faced with Trolls (big and stupid) and Ghosts with heat-seeking skull missiles (I kid you not) you either fight bravely or shout "Arrgggh!" and run away.

Three o'clock in the morning. Three o'-bloody-clock! When I finally left the upper catacombs and strolled wearily into the Pagan sunlight, the afternoon, the evening, let's face it, the entire day had gone. I should have left it there. I should have saved the game at Stone Cove, quit and turned off the machine.

But I didn't. I just wanted to get that tiny bit further. I just wanted to try out that last spell the Necromancer gave me. 'Create Golem' he said it was called. I need some dirt and some blood and...

Okay, I know it sounds like I've already popped down to C&A to put my anorak on order, but Richard Garriott's latest Ultima offering, Pagan, has me well and truly hooked. I'm amazed. I've never liked RPGs before; the whole genre excites me about as much as a Rumanian shotputter in a little black dress — and that's not at all, before you say anything.

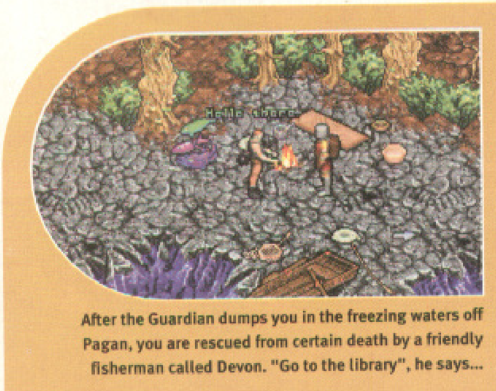
But playing Ultima VIII (or U8, as I'll refer to it from now on) is like reading a good book. You get so involved you just want to keep turning over one more page, travelling to just one more location, before you finally switch off the lights and try to get some sleep. In fact, I don't think it's really an RPG at all — but I'll get to this later.

Created by Richard Garriott back in the early 80s, the Ultima series is probably the longest running and most complex collection of games in computer history. Simply and sweepingly put, it's a fantasy role-playing game, a story that chronicles the exploits of the Avatar — fearless warrior and paragon of virtue — as he battles plagues, thwarts sinister plots and confronts huge alien entities.

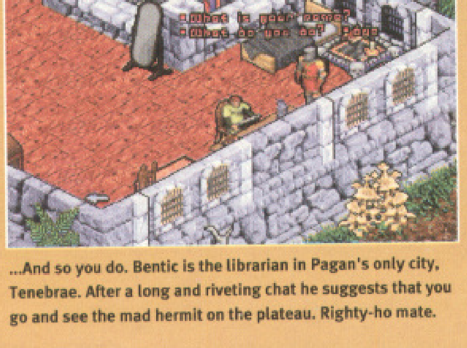
Most of the adventures have been set in the fictional land of Britannia, a Tolkien-style kingdom ruled by Garriott's alter ego Lord British. Now in U8 things are hotting up and the battle between the Avatar and his enemy the Guardian rages beyond Britannia and across dimensions to the isle of Pagan.

If you battled to the end of Ultima VII: Serpent Isle, you'll know that your celebratory "Wa-hey I've defeated the Guardian and saved Britannia" party was rudely gate-crashed when the Avatar was dragged away by a huge, red hand.

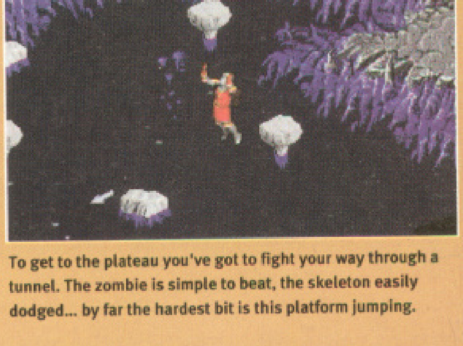
As the curtain rises on U8, the animated intro sequence shows the aforementioned huge, red hand reaching through into another dimension and dropping the tiny form of the Avatar (and that's you that is) into the barren land of Pagan, a place where forces loyal to the Guardian are in total control. You start the game with no con-



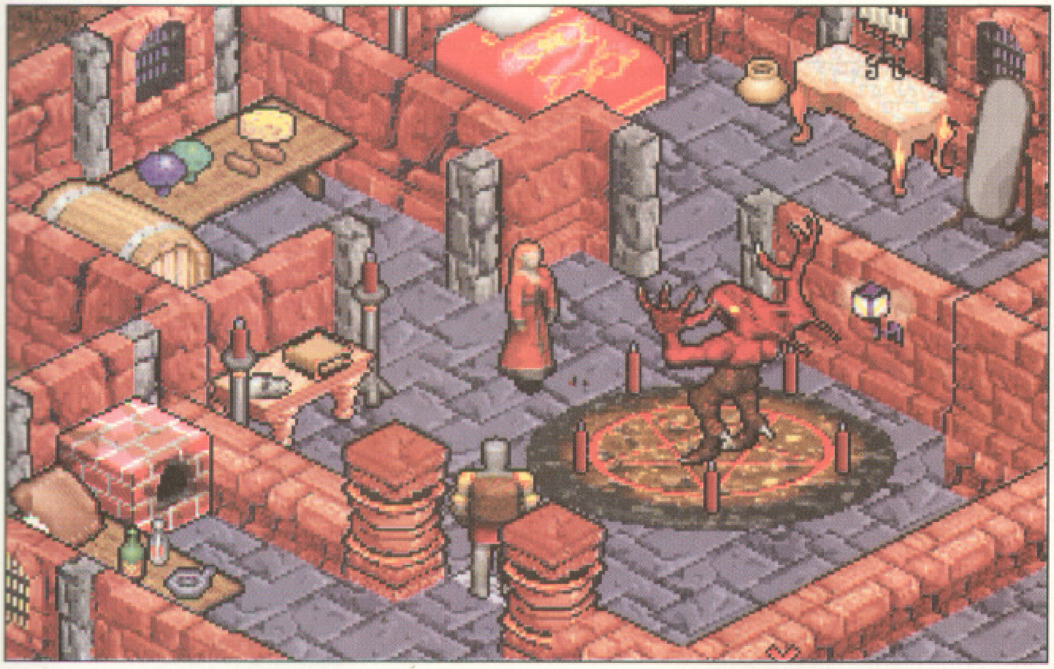
After the Guardian dumps you in the freezing waters off Pagan, you are rescued from certain death by a friendly fisherman called Devon. "Go to the library", he says...

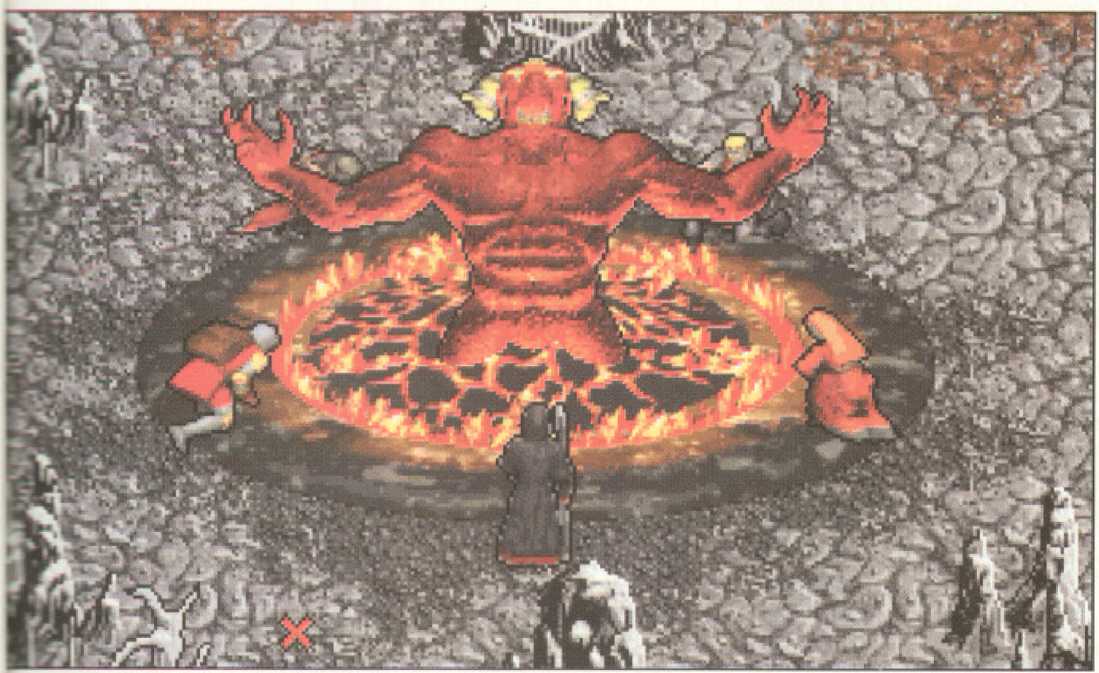


...And so you do. Bentic is the librarian in Pagan's only city, Tenebrae. After a long and riveting chat he suggests that you go and see the mad hermit on the plateau. Righty-ho mate.



To get to the plateau you've got to fight your way through a tunnel. The zombie is simple to beat, the skeleton easily dodged... by far the hardest bit is this platform jumping.





(Top) The mage woman flirts with death by summoning a fire demon from the darkest depths of the pit. In U8 the inhabitants of Pagan either worship the air, the earth, the water or the fire elemental. Each religion has its own powerful magics and you'll need to master all of them. (Above) Calling little fire demons into home-made pentagrams is undoubtedly a neat trick, but things really start to get serious when you summon the boss elemental himself. Ladies and Gentlemen put your hands together for Pyros, god of fire. No flash photography, please..

tacts, no money, no weapons and no armour. All you've got is a friend called Devon, two fish and some warm underwear. Things can only get better.

So after walking west, rooting around in a barrel for a knife and watching a beheading, it's on to the city gates. U8 centres in and around the city of Tenebrae and your aim is to follow the plot, learn the secrets of the four schools of magic, seek out a fifth magic, become a god (as you do) and then battle the four elemental titans to free Pagan, with two falls, two submissions or a knock-out deciding the winner.

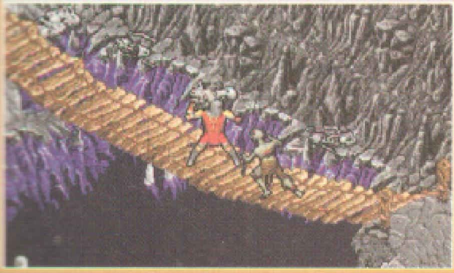
You know the sort of thing: one man against terrible odds, strange magics, even stranger monsters, female executioners in tight black leather and so on. U8 follows the tried and tested quest-based adventure format and that's really all I'm going to say about it because half the fun is discovering all the different locations, items and monsters for yourself. No, really.

Of course, with each new Ultima game Garriott and co completely revamp the game engine and the first thing that you'll notice as you wander around U8 is the superb quality of the graphics. Whereas in Ultima VII you viewed your character from above, U8 employs a slightly sexier isometric-3D view, which allows a greater degree of detail and a lot more realism.

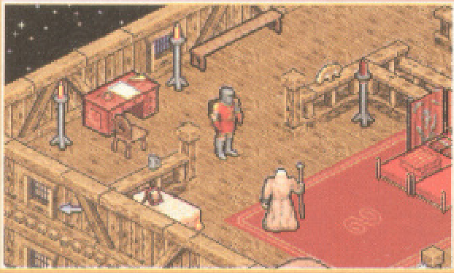
You can see how gorgeous the game looks from the screenshots; the sprites have been enlarged by up to 30% and the animation is smooth and fluid. The Avatar now runs, jumps and teeters on clifftops like never before. Each character has over 400 frames of animation and the Avatar is drawn with a whopping 1,200 frames. Zombies limp, spiders scuttle and floating eyeballs, er, float. In short, on a visual level U8 is simply beautiful.

But size isn't everything and although U8 has some stunning animation, a tortuously complicated plot and a suitably dramatic musical score, there are a few minor changes that might force Ultima veterans to leap out of their comfy chairs and take to the streets in protest.

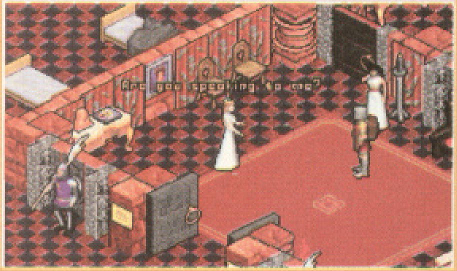
First, due to the big visuals there's no room this time around for your band of faithful companions and second, the attention to detail has meant that



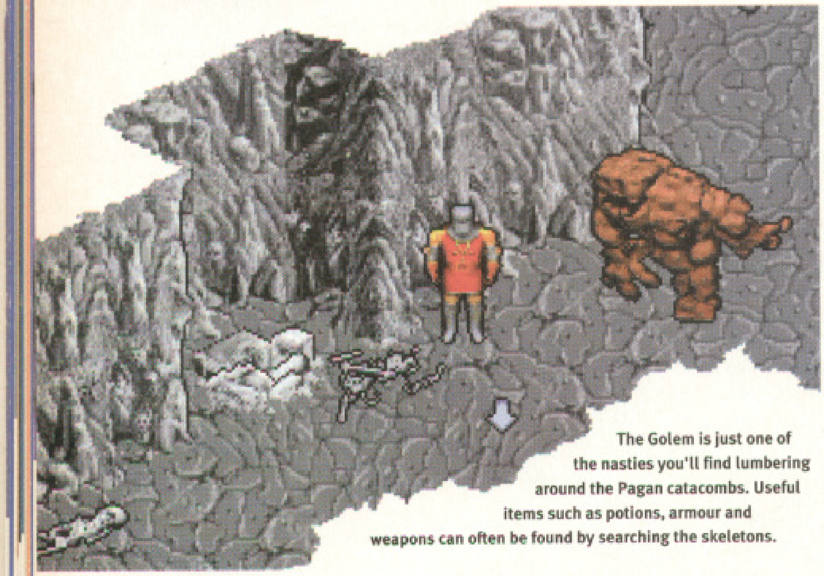
The way is long and hard. After the joy of jumping, a simple lever puzzle must be solved to raise some gates and allow you access to the plateau. Dramatic bridge fight first though.



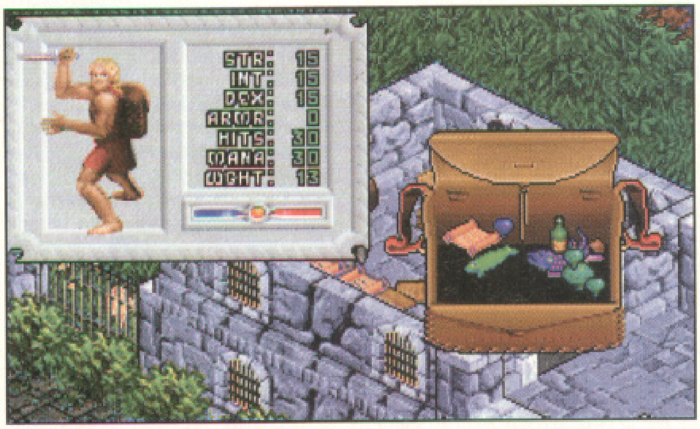
Mythran the wizard lives a happy but lonely life on the plateau. According to him, your best chance of escape lies with the Necomancers near the city. Back we go...



The Necromancers are a shifty lot and won't let you into their gang unless you retrieve a ceremonial dagger from the Lady Mordea, ruler of the city. Apparently her maid has the key.



The Golem is just one of the nasties you'll find lumbering around the Pagan catacombs. Useful items such as potions, armour and weapons can often be found by searching the skeletons.



STR: 15
INT: 15
DEX: 15
ARMR: 0
HITS: 30
MANA: 30
WGHT: 13

(Above) Double click on the Avatar and you bring up the status screen (pretty self explanatory really). Click again on the backpack and a picture of your current inventory pops up.

(Below) After necromancers and fire demons the Avatar gets in a whirl with the air elemental.

although U8 is still impressively big, it's only 25% as large as Ultima VII.

Okay, not too much of a problem so far. But where people might have been expecting Garriott to improve the graphics, bump up the scrolling speed and make the control interface a bit less fiddly, what has actually happened is that U8 has undergone a quantum leap into the mainstream.

Yes, if you're an Ultima fan there's a third thing I don't think you're going to like. As Origin are trying to make the Ultima games appeal to a wider audience, i.e to the 'first-time roleplayer' like myself, U8 has been slimmed and trimmed and has become more of a platform-jumping arcade adventure. The few token RPG stats seem to be just chucked in there for good measure.

But while Ultima devotees may fall dramatically to the floor screaming "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!", the new arcade emphasis is probably the one reason why newcomers will really like U8. I've admitted that RPG's usually bore me stupid, so the last thing I want of an evening is to spend two hours in the Armpit & Firkin chatting to assorted cut-throats and rumour-spreaders about the seven virtues and the black jewel of Mondain. Nor do I want any truck with Orc-batterers, Beholders and hit points at all. None what-so-ever. Strangely, U8 isn't like this and although you still collect magic items and your stats affect your performance, it really doesn't seem like an RPG at all.

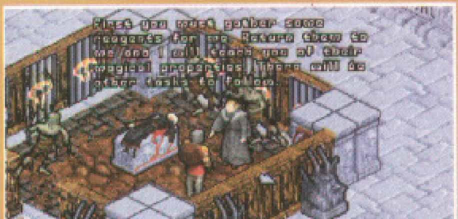
Oh, there are hit points and dexterity ratings and you can only carry a certain weight, but whereas success in Ultima VII often depended on saying the right thing to the right person at the right time, in U8 speedy progress will depend on how good you are at jumping platforms, dodging fire-bombs and solving simple lever puzzles. In fact most of the harder sections involve no character interaction or complex puzzles at all, just repeated bouts of abyss leaping and maze wandering.

There's no denying that U8 is a stunningly impressive game and I like it enough to take it home to meet my parents, but it's soooo slow. The scrolling is often horribly jerky and if there is more than one monster on the screen (and there frequently is), it chugs along so slowly I often wanted to ram the

PASS *NOTES*

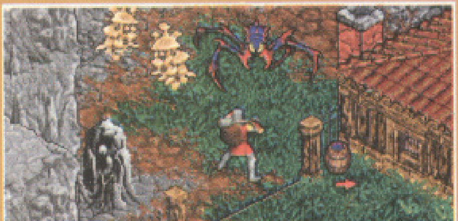
No 4,762: The Avatar

Age: As old as you want him to be.
Appearance: Knight of the Round Table.
Job: Hero and star of the brand new Ultima game, Pagan, written and designed by Richard Garriott.
Richard Garriott? You mean the Origin programmer who has a plait in his hair and owns a huge mansion that he opens up on Halloween to stage a lavish and expensive haunted house party for all his friends? Yep, that's the one.
What's this Avatar business then? The Avatar is the central hero, a man who has the unenviable ability to arrive naked anywhere in the universe and still triumph against impossible odds. Of course, he wasn't always called the Avatar, he actually became the Avatar after finding the mysterious seven virtues in Ultima 6. Anyway, the Avatar is your persona in the gameworld and you move him about with your mouse.
Avatar is a title? Absolutely. He's not Bob Avatar or Avatar O'Brien... Apparently 'Avatar' translates to mean 'Champion'.
Yuck: Yes, he's a Mr Goody-Two-Shoes.
What does he do? Generally he strides purposefully around strange lands, hacking away at monsters, chatting to friendly barkeeps and sneaking into unlocked houses to nick all the owners' cash.
But you said he was good? Yes, but I didn't say he was perfect.
What else? He's been known to dabble in the magic arts and in this latest game he can run, jump and climb like never before. Clicking on him with the mouse brings up the statistics screen (strength, dexterity, how much armour he's carrying, etc) while clicking on the backpack shows you what is currently being carried in the inventory.
Prospects: Looking good. He's contracted to do at least another two Ultima games and then plans to nip up to Stratford to do some theatre. Will probably be played by Arnie Schwarzenegger when Ultima: The Movie comes out.
Most likely to say: Oh crap, where I am this time?
Least likely to say: Anything unless you've forked out an extra £20 for the speech pack.



First you must gather some reagents for me. Return them to me and I will teach you of their magical properties. There will be other tasks to follow.

After getting the dagger, the Necromancer ritually murders his superior (he was dying anyway, you see) and takes you on as his apprentice. Next you have to find some reagents...



The new Necromancer needs some sticks and a rare flower called Executioner's Hood (?). Oops, none here and by the way fighting a Kith (the giant spider thing) is akin to suicide.

"Go and seek out the old Necromancers", he said so off I went. Now is really starts to get hard but every necromancer gives you a new spell to learn. 'Withstand death' is handy...

mouse through the screen in frustration.

Because of the large graphics and the detail, if you haven't got a 486 machine I suggest you don't even try playing U8 — the game will move at a snail's pace. It's painfully sluggish on a 25MHz 486, slow on a 33MHz and just about bearable on a top-whack 66MHz 486 DX2. If your machine isn't well-endowed in the processor department, it may well become almost unplayable.

If the speed problem is frustrating, the fiddly U8 control system is absolutely infuriating. Essentially the interface is the same as Ultima VII, with the Avatar's movements controlled with the right mouse button and things like conversations and the inventory screen accessed by pressing the left.

Instead of clicking on the place you want to travel to and watching the Avatar stroll casually to it (a la Day of the Tentacle), you have to navigate around manually. Normally this wouldn't be a problem but sometimes the controls won't respond and simple things like picking up items and walking through doors can become a nightmare.

In a game where quick movement and arcade reflexes play a much bigger role, there are times when U8 can be seriously annoying. Because of the fiddly controls and the real-time combat and platform jumping it's wise to save your game as often as possible. Unfortunately there are only eleven free Save game slots, and it takes so long to save and load games that if you've been playing for a month I guarantee at least a week of that time will have been spent waiting for your last save to reload.

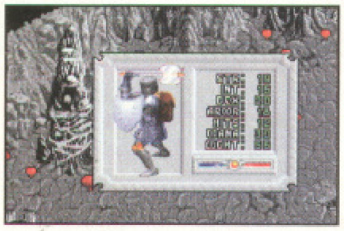
But if you can ignore all these niggles, U8 is a hugely involving and absorbing game. I'm hopelessly lost in it and if you're looking for a game that will keep you going for months rather than weeks, U8 is most definitely it.

The attention to detail and atmosphere is incredible: zombies rise out of the ground, skeletons crumble and reform like an old Clash Of The Titans special effect, and there's always something new to kill and discover.

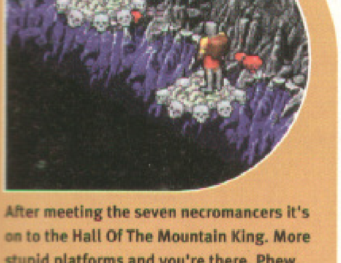
Yes, I know I've just spent five paragraphs saying how frustrating it all is, but that really doesn't detract from the fact that U8 is still a superb mix of real-time combat, arcade puzzles and fantasy role-play.

Ultima veterans may not be happy about the way the game has repositioned, but if you're a first-time role-player and you've been wondering what all this Ultima business is all about, U8 is a simple and friendly introduction. Because of the speed and control problems it doesn't quite make it up to the dizzy heights of a PC Games Star award, but I like the game so much that if I ever see Richard Garriott again I might even offer to buy him a pint. Maybe.

That's it. If you've got a fast 486 go out and buy U8. If you like Ultima go out and buy U8. Hey, and if you do, point me towards the Hall Of The Mountain King, would ya?



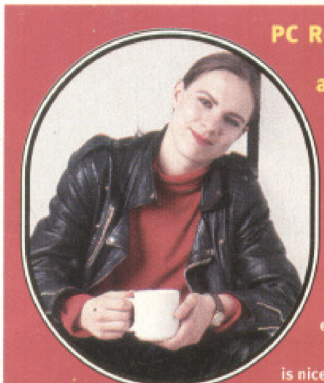
You may start wearing a sack but give it a week and you too can have shiny armour...



After meeting the seven necromancers it's on to the Hall Of The Mountain King. More stupid platforms and you're there. Phew.

What's *so great* about Ultima VIII?

PC Review's role-playing specialist and Ultima fanatic Cal Jones gives her views on Richard Garriott's latest opus.

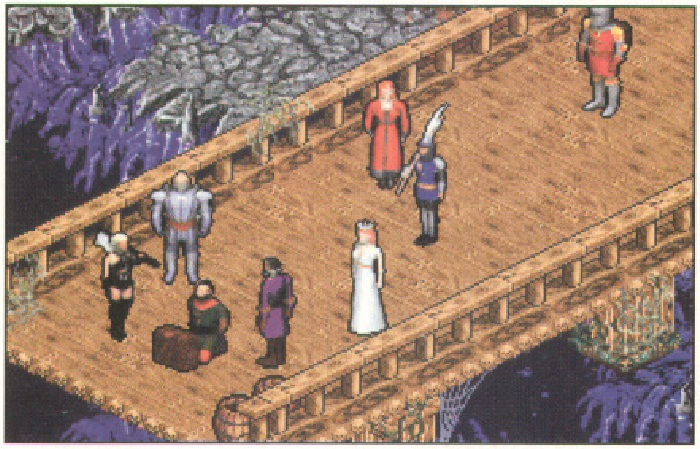


Ultima VII was a fine game, but the interface was a little tricky for novice role-players to master. Unfortunately, rather than rectify this glaring fault, Origin has made the interface even *less* friendly.

The Avatar can now run, jump and climb, which is nice on a cosmetic level but complicates the gameplay. It often takes several goes to pick up an item or walk through a doorway, which irritated the Hell out of me.

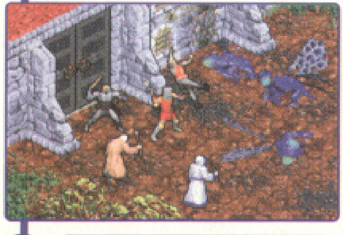
What's more, there are now numerous arcade style puzzles in the game, such as leaping from one platform to another. As I said in my review of the game in PC Review (May issue), if I'd wanted a platform game I would have bought Prince of Persia or Flashback. I think Origin should have concentrated on improving interface, scrolling and game speed whilst retaining the depth of plot Ultima games are famous for, instead of introducing these arcade sections.

Even if all this leaping around does appeal to first time role-players (I found it irritating), I think that they will be put off by the awkward controls. Ultima VIII is more an arcade adventure than an RPG and, in my mind, this is a mistake.

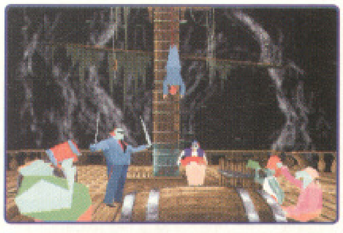


IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Playing U8 you're struck by just how much the gameplay resembles Alone In The Dark. Richard Garriott is known to be a big fan of the Infogrames classic, and the gameplay and character movement in U8 is highly similar. Like Alone In The Dark, U8's combat can be fiddly and enemies are often dispatched by luck rather than with any real skill. Obviously U8 is bigger and more complex but if you fancy atmosphere, unmitigated violence and voodoo magic, Alone In The Dark 2 neatly fits the bill. It's a damn sight easier than U8, anyway.



ULTIMA VIII ...



...ALONE IN THE DARK 2

PAGAN: *ULTIMA VIII*

ELECTRONIC ARTS/ORIGIN

(0753) 549442

£44.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33 MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 35Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards.

*THE **GOOD...***

- A superb plot, nice sound, beautiful animation and lots of atmosphere. What more could you ask for?
- The sheer size means that it'll take you months not weeks to complete.
- A good introduction to the series for the first-time role-player.

*...AND THE **BAD***

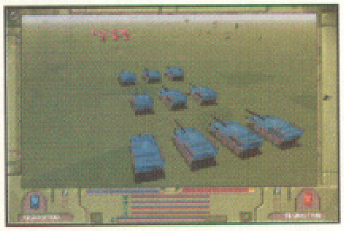
- Ultima veterans may grumble about the real-time combat and platform jumping.
- The control system is very fiddly.

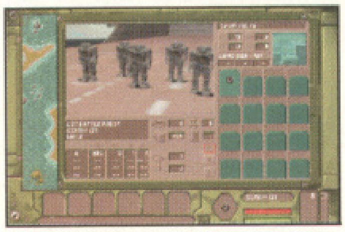
OVERALL

89%

Battle Isle II CD

Field Marshall Alex Fraser deploys the entire contents on his arsenal in Battle Isle 2 — the CD wargame to conquer them all.





(Left) Animated 3D combat scenes inject action into any hex-based wargame.
(Right) As for unit details, Battle Isle 2 is a major shareholder in Statistics-R-Us.

Whether it's submarines in the bath or toy soldiers on the bedroom floor, we've all played the role of an all-conquering commander-in-chief at some time or other. And that, in all its computerised glory, is what Battle Isle 2 is all about — an immense fantasy wargame mixing top-down tactical views and 3D vector combat scenes.

It's not a difficult game to figure out (it's a wargame, it's got hexagons and little units to move around and you attack other little units) but it is a difficult game to master and one that will take you a long time to complete. A huge number of maps and scenarios make up the overall campaign, and at times there are over 400 units and five different armies at each other's throats — all of which you have to deal with.

If there's an option missing, I can't find it: from building roads and railways, blowing up bridges, refitting and to training troops and adding new weaponry, Battle Isle 2 is a hugely detailed game with features stuck on everywhere you could possibly stick them. It even has a plot (of sorts).

Battle Isle 2 brings several refreshing twists to the tired old wargame. Instead of a rigid turn-based system where you have to wait to see the outcome of each phase, you can move a unit and attack with it straight away, meaning you can change your tactics on the run. Which is something you'll have to do anyway, because new orders from High Command, the sudden appearance of new enemy units and dubious intelligence reports are constantly thrown at you.

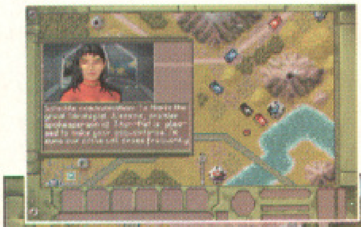
You still have to plan your moves meticulously, though. You can't just pile forward with relentless and rash attacks because (a) because your visual range is limited by the terrain and your radar cover, (b) you have to organise your supply lines or your tanks will run out of gas, and (c) the new computer intelligence is one of the toughest you're ever likely to come up against in a strategy game.

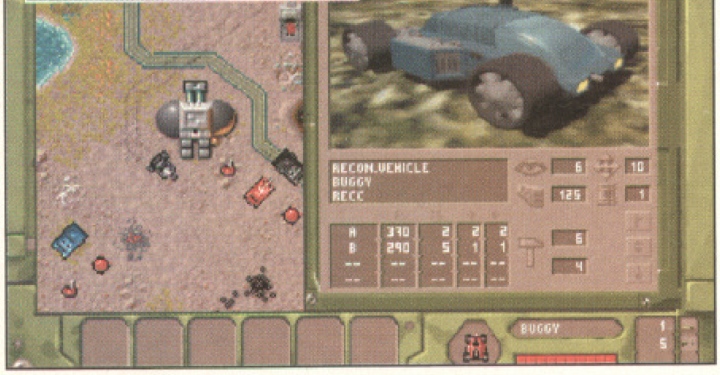
You can't even ignore the weather. Say, for example, a river freezes over: you can take a chance that it'll stay that way long enough for you to get a light armoured division to the other side. Or not. It's your decision, and your risk.

Either way, it's a rare thing to find pace and suspense in a large strategy wargame as well as the need for careful planning. Okay, so it's lost some of the simple charm of its predecessors, but it's a far better and more sophisticated game all round.

The only real fault with Battle Isle 2 is that the computer, for all its cunning, struggles to make up its mind during the larger battles. Sometimes it nods off long enough for you to nip down the pub for a stiff one between turns, which makes it a long, slow process to complete a major battle in one sitting.

But if you've got the patience, Battle Isle 2 offers by far the most approachable strategy wargaming money can buy. Don't dismiss it out of hand because wargames have a reputation on a par with armoured trainspotting: this one has a real hook to it and more long-term gameplay on one disc than most publishers can fit on twenty.





(Left) Look, we're in the middle of a bloody war here, woman! I don't have time to chat ...
(Below) Buggies — fast, well armed, and not like a pram at all.

BATTLE ISLE 2 CD

BLUEBYTE/IN-HOUSE
(0727) 868005
£54.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 486, VGA, 580K, 4Mb RAM and a double-speed CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib, Sound Blaster, Roland and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Hugely involving, hours of gameplay and a massive challenge.
- More approachable than any other strategy wargame known to Man.
- Tough as Hell to beat.

...AND THE BAD

- Slow to make up its mind on the larger maps.
- Sadly, your in-game character is a complete and utter nerk who looks like he ought to be wearing a tank top. War is Hell.

OVERALL 90%

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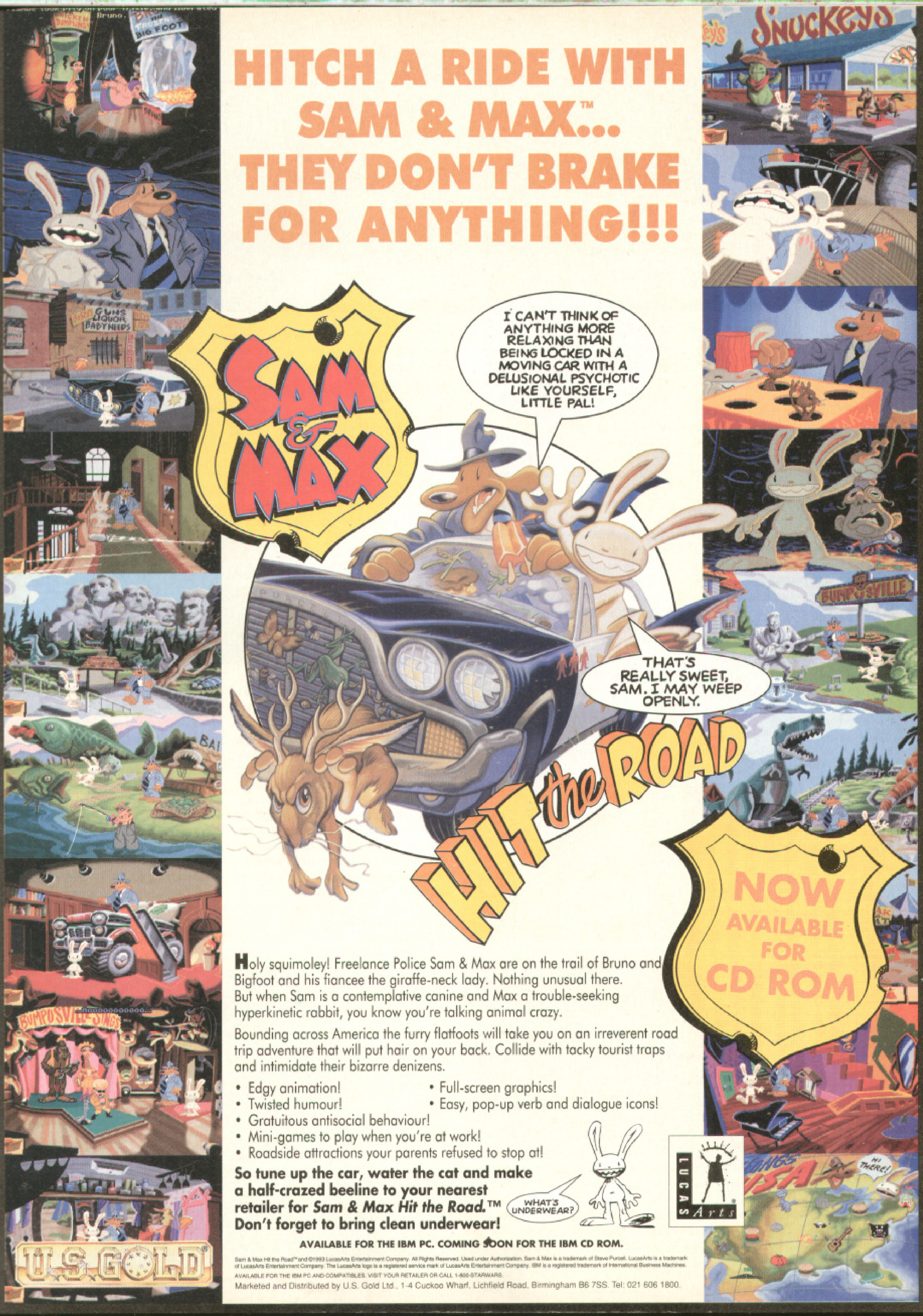
SAM & MAX
I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE RELAXING THAN BEING LOCKED IN A MOVING CAR WITH A DELUSIONAL PSYCHOTIC LIKE YOURSELF, LITTLE PAL!
THAT'S REALLY SWEET, SAM. I MAY WEEP OPENLY.
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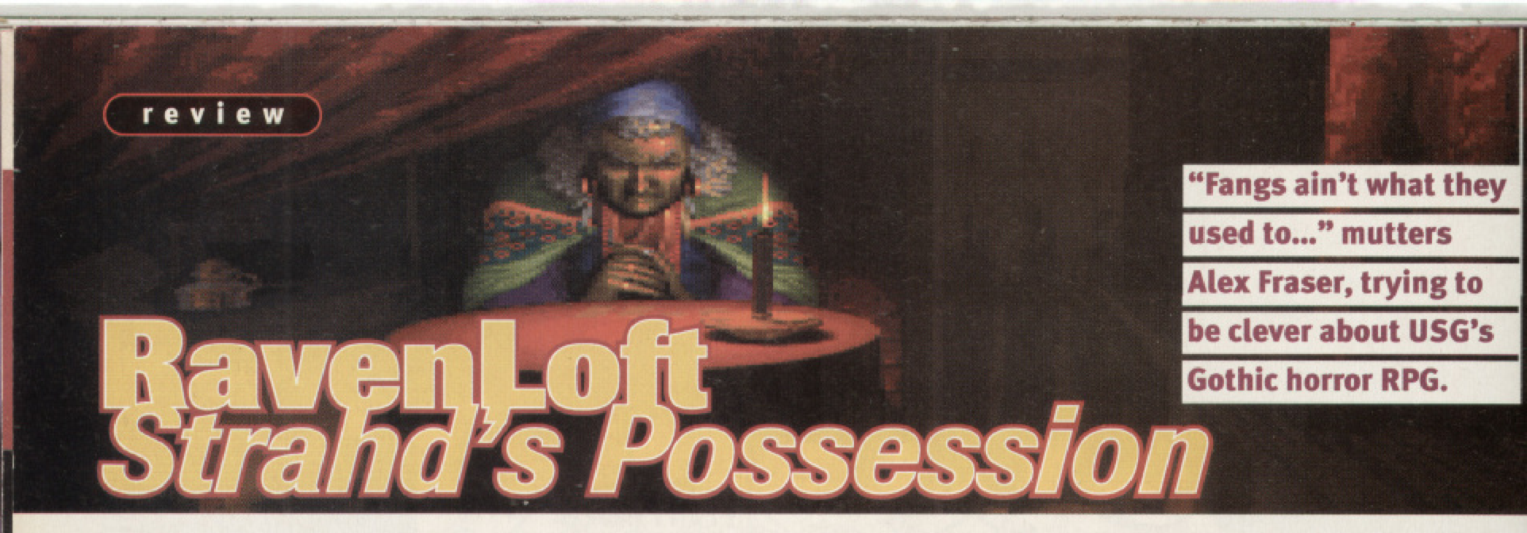


RavenLoft
Strahd's Possession

"Fangs ain't what they used to..." mutters Alex Fraser, trying to be clever about USG's Gothic horror RPG.

It's a tough business being scary these days. What used to be frightening twenty or thirty years ago seems plain laughable now. I mean, take a look at the films Hammer used to make; they were the 'video nasties' of their time, yet what are they today? Nothing more than handy fillers in BBC 2's late-night scheduling.

Classic 'gothic horror' creations, like the Werewolf, the Mummy and Frankenstein's monster, have lost nearly all their power to chill the blood, with modern fright fans preferring to get their kicks from the more grisly likes of Freddy Krueger and Jason Voorhees.

But what of the poor old Vampire? It's probably the monster that's suffered most from changing tastes in what's scary and what's not. After all, what's so heart-stoppingly terrifying about a creature with severe dental problems that can be easily repelled by a whiff of garlic?

If you ever see a Vampire in a movie these days, you can bet it'll be in some dire 'tongue-in-cheek horror spoof' like Fright Night or Vamp. Even Francis Ford Coppola seems to have acknowledged the problem that Vampires just ain't frightening any more, as his recent reworking of Bram Stoker's Dracula was more of a macabre love story than a horror flick.

All this, however, hasn't stopped SSI from making a Vampire the central baddy of its latest Advanced Dungeons & Dragons RPG. According to the blurb writers at SSI, RavenLoft is, and I quote, "gothic horror role-playing at its very best." Hmmm, well cheers for telling me guys, but I think I'll be the judge of that, thank you very much.

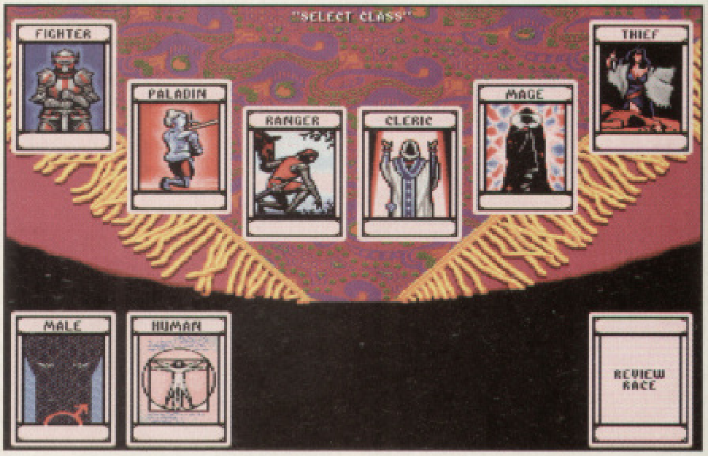
The game starts off traditionally enough, with two brave adventurers paying a friendly visit to the good Lord Dhelt. They reach his castle abode just in time to witness a vicious attack on Dhelt by a mysterious thief, who makes off with the Lord's precious amulet. Angered by this barbaric act, the adventurers give chase...

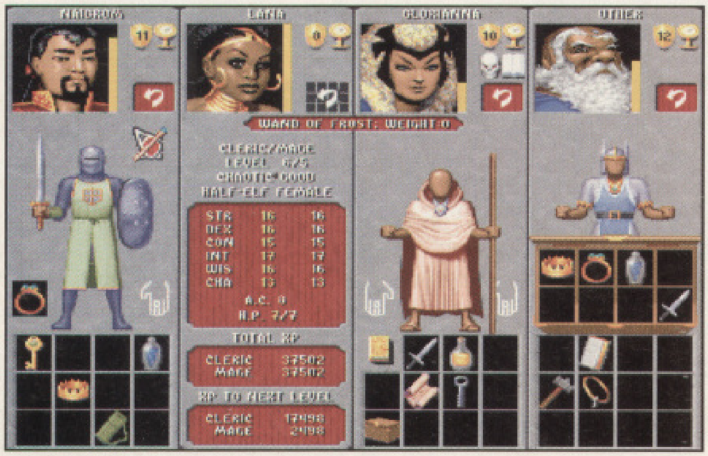
It doesn't take long for the heroes to catch up with the scarpering miscreant, and it doesn't take them much longer to put him to the sword (justice is swift and brutal in Lord Dhelt's realm). However, as they pick up the stolen amulet, a weird fog swirls in around them and the next thing they know they've been magically transported to a mysterious foreign land.

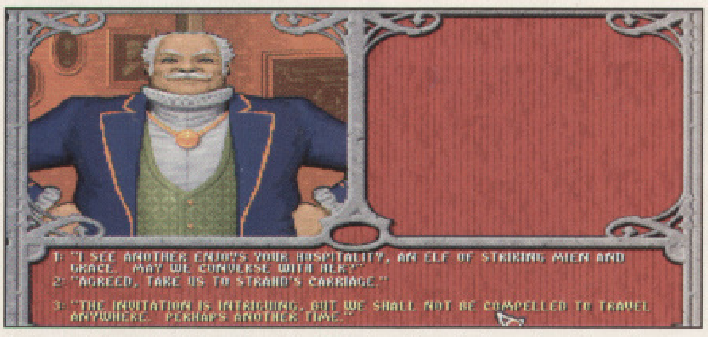
Our brave adventurers soon realise that there's something very badly wrong with their strange new home. Why is the countryside bounded by a dense, poisonous fog, making it impossible for them to leave? And why are all the people they meet petrified of leaving their houses after sunset? And who — or what — is the mysterious Strahd that everyone talks about in such hushed tones? They'll have to find the answers to all these questions and more if they're ever to see Lord Dhelt's fair land again...

The plot of RavenLoft is definitely one of the game's strong points. You're plonked in the middle of the countryside with literally no clue as to what's going on, and it's only by talking to people along the way that you begin to piece together clues as to what's going on and how to get home.

(Below) Everything in RavenLoft has been made easy-to-use. Even generating a character is simple — you just click on the cards dealt out to you by the sexy gypsy to select race, class and so on and the computer handles the rest.



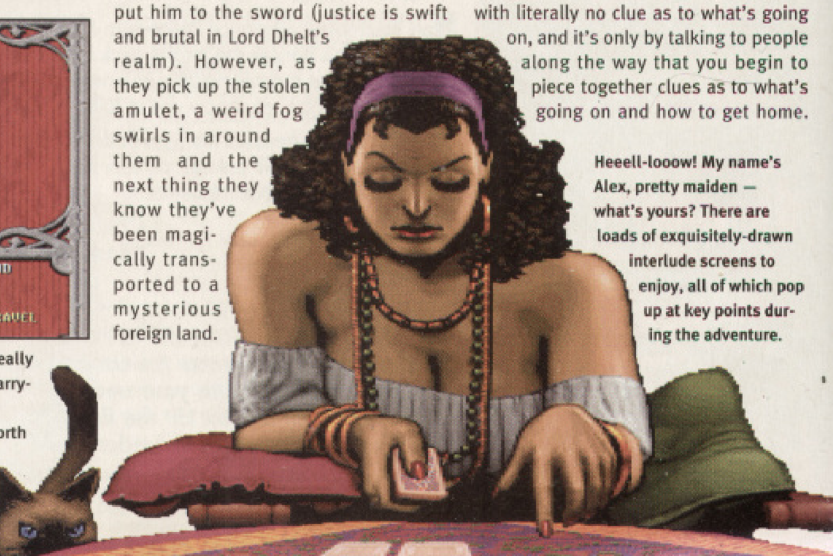




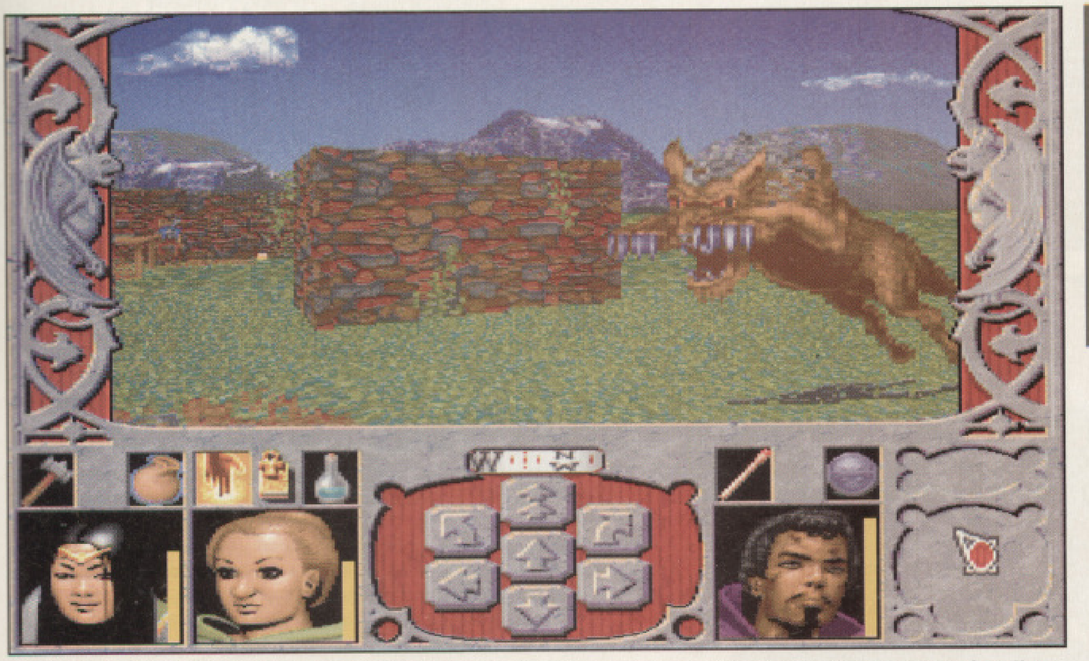
1: "I SEE ANOTHER ENJOYS YOUR HOSPITALITY, AN ELF OF STRIKING MIEN AND GRACE. MAY WE CONVERSE WITH HER?"
2: "AGREED, TAKE US TO STRAHD'S CARRIAGE."
3: "THE INVITATION IS INTRIGUING, BUT WE SHALL NOT BE COMPELLED TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE. PERHAPS ANOTHER TIME."

(Above top) We couldn't let a review of an RPG go by without having a shot of the really interesting inventory screen. From here you can check out what each character is carrying and check their stats. Great, eh...?

(Above) Generally speaking, if someone doesn't try to kill you then it's probably worth talking to them. During conversations a list of chat-up lines will appear and it's up to you to pick the appropriate one. You know the sort of thing.



Heeell-looow! My name's Alex, pretty maiden — what's yours? There are loads of exquisitely-drawn interlude screens to enjoy, all of which pop up at key points during the adventure.

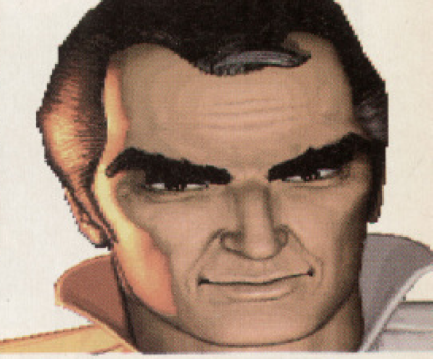


(Above) Fight! Fight! Fight! Should a nasty appear, you can launch into combat by just clicking on your opponent with the mouse pointer. Your party will then set to with whatever weapons they're currently holding.

(Right) Here he is — that man of mystery, Strahd. He seems like the perfect gent the first time you meet him, but later on you discover that he's completely batty. Hur-hur, 'batty' — geddit?

CD *TOO!*

A CD version of RavenLoft is being released simultaneously with the disk version. It's fundamentally the same game, but with a few tweaks here and there. The main differences are that the intro is animated and accompanied by a heavily-accented voiceover (I wouldn't get too excited though, as frankly it's a bit boring) and during the game there are some new monsters to fight.



The urge to get to the bottom of the mystery provides the player with a strong reason to complete the game.

Although RavenLoft could've got very complicated very quickly because of this rather 'open' start, the design is such that you've always got a pretty good idea of where to head to and who you've got to talk to next.

In fact, it's maybe a little too tightly designed, and hard-core RPGers who prefer to wander around and discover things for themselves may find the 'linear' nature of the plot annoyingly constricting. Anyone else, though, who doesn't enjoy spending hours trekking from NPC to NPC in the hope of finding some minor clue on how to make progress, won't grumble, that's for sure.

Graphically RavenLoft is quite nice too. While the Wolfenstein-style 3D isn't the smoothest you've ever seen, it's a lot more detailed than most, with objects and people still looking vaguely recognisable even when you're up close to them and not distorting into a mass of Lego bricks.

If I've got a major complaint about the graphics at all it's the way there's a sudden change in graphic style as you, say, walk through a gate on the road and enter a town. Everything, even the colour of the sky, changes, giving you the impression that the gameworld is made up of seperate, self-contained 'lumps'. It's jarring and damages the carefully-constructed atmosphere a bit, but you get used to it and it doesn't spoil your overall enjoyment too much.

Admittedly, there are other things that annoy, like the fact that the buildings in the towns don't have roofs and that there's very little sensation of depth in the dungeon corridors, but these are relatively minor and not really worth making a big deal about.

Of course, being an official AD&D game there are loads of stats and other complicated stuff to contend with, but these take a back-seat to the action thanks to the well-designed and very friendly user interface. Certainly I never found my monster slaying and puzzle solving being held up by having to work out composite Armour Classes or anything like that.

Any major complaints about RavenLoft are the same as those that afflict all too many RPGs; silly little things like the way that when fighting a monster and it's going badly, you can nip around the corner, rest to recoup your hit points and then wake up ten hours later and continue the battle. RPG fans will probably forgive RavenLoft that, though.

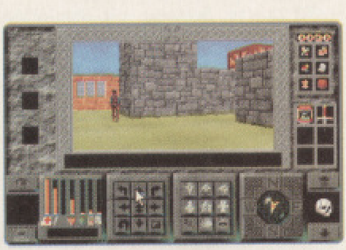
The big question, then, given that this is supposedly "gothic horror roleplaying at its very best" and that Vampires aren't scary, is "Is RavenLoft spooky? Well, while you won't wet yourself or have nightmares, there's definitely an eerie atmosphere about the game, and the excellent use of sound effects provides some good shock moments from time to time.

All in all, I was more than pleasantly surprised by RavenLoft: Strahd's Possession. I'm not what you'd call a real RPG nut, but RavenLoft managed to pull me in and keep me playing above and beyond the call of reviewing duty. Although it's not the best RPG you'll ever play, it's certainly one of the better ones and, as such, deserves your attention.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

With its free-roaming 3D environment and "Don't go out after dark..." plot, RavenLoft reminded me very strongly of Legends Of Valour, which it surpasses in almost every department. It certainly looks and sounds better than Valour, and the plot is much more 'directed', eliminating the pointless and very boring wandering around that marred that game.

RAVENLOFT OUTSPOOKS...



...LEGENDS OF VALOUR.

RAVENLOFT

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£45.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 21Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Aria, Soundscape, Soundman Wave and Sound Blaster soundcards, amongst many others.

*THE **GOOD...***

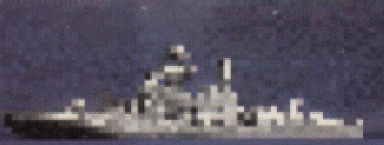
- An atmospheric scenario free of the usual sword-'n'-sorcery cliches.
- Excellent player interface that's both easy to use yet very flexible.
- A lot easier to get into than previous SSI adventures.

*...AND THE **BAD***

- The occasional graphic 'scene changes' can be jarring and ruin the sense of exploring a 'real' world.
- The plot is too linear in places.
- It's tough — very tough.

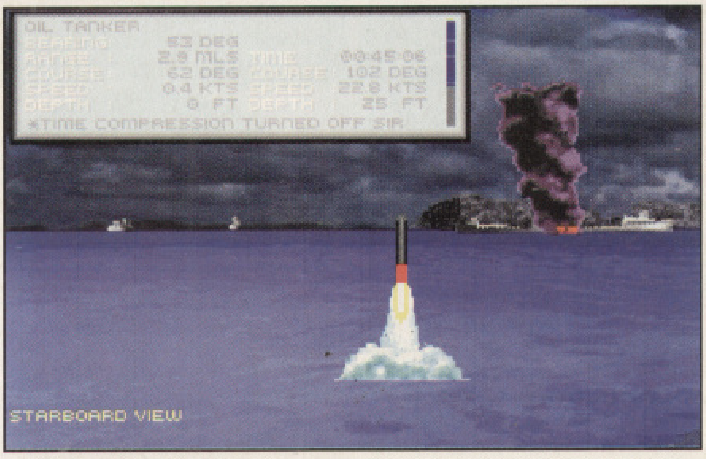
OVERALL

81%



SSN-21 Seawolf

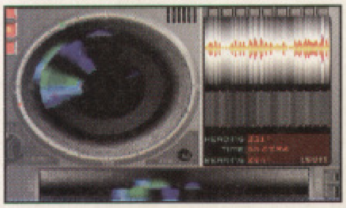
Dean Evans learns to tip-toe through the North Atlantic in a new SSN-21 Seawolf kindly loaned to him by Electronic Arts.



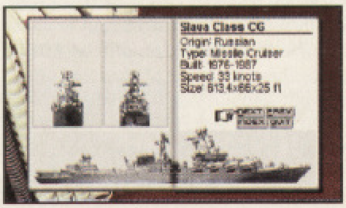
OIL TANKER
BEARING 53 DEG
RANGE 2.9 MLS TIME 00:45:06
COURSE 62 DEG COURSE 102 DEG
SPEED 0.4 KTS SPEED 22.8 KTS
DEPTH 0 FT DEPTH 25 FT
*TIME COMPRESSION TURNED OFF SIR

A sub sim is nothing without the nifty periscope view and here a tanker burns merrily against the stormy sky as a Harpoon missile erupts out of the water.

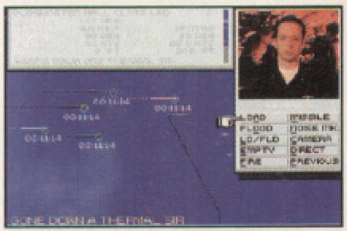
(Below) Know your ships. Visual identification of your targets is very important so you can leave the small fry and concentrate on the cruisers, freighters and battleships



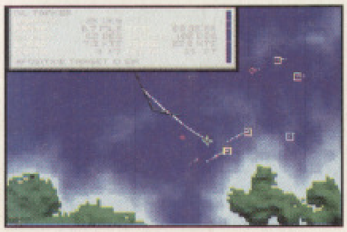
This confusing little gauge is the much-vaunted 'waterfall' display. By moving the dot around the edge you can listen to any of the sonar contacts.



Slava Class CG
Origin: Russian
Type: Missile Cruiser
Built: 1976-1987
Speed: 33 knots
Size: 613.4x66x25 ft



The Seawolf class submarine has a formidable arsenal — high speed torpedoes, wake homing torpedoes, Tomahawk missiles, Sea Lance missiles and Harpoon missiles.



The overhead map is where the information received from your sonar is displayed. Now is the time to start making those tricky tactical decisions. Where's Sean Connery talking Russian when you need him?

Remember 688 Attack Sub? Well, in 1989 this acclaimed submarine sim allowed armchair captains to torpedo enemy shipping and rig for depth charge attacks without leaving the cosy comfort of their easy chairs. Hundreds of people got their kicks by sitting patiently on the ocean bed in claustrophobic metal cylinders, dodging pursuing destroyers and calculating torpedo running times.

In 1994 Electronic Arts has finally released SSN-21 Seawolf (the sequel to 688), based on the US Navy's proposed Seawolf Attack Sub. Like Sean Connery's Scottish Russian in the The Hunt For Red October, now you can command your very own multi-billion dollar, propeller-driven tube in the cold, dark waters of the North Atlantic. Maybe bulkheads, torpedoes and sonar pings can be exciting after all...

The game itself features 33 very difficult missions and, like EA's Seal Team, you can either play these missions individually or plump for the campaign which links them all together in a narrative. The campaign option is set after a surprise military coup in Russia and, as the first mission begins, a rebel Soviet fleet has set sail from Arhangel towards Cuba. Commanding your new submarine you have orders to stop this fleet while ensuring that the situation doesn't escalate into a nuclear confrontation.

Naturally, Seawolf has all the usual submarine game features and so you can still spend happy hours diving, peeping through the periscope and launching tinfish at oil-laden tankers. But as the Seawolf is a nuclear-powered sub, it also carries a variety of missiles, a satellite communications system and the most sophisticated sonar system I have ever come across.

Take a quick glance at the Seawolf's 'waterfall' sonar display and you'll probably see nothing more han a big dark circle with some smudges of colour inside it. But this delicate piece of equipment is the key to becoming a successful submarine captain.

The display shows the raw sonar data as it's received by the sonar operator and you can either leave him to identify the targets (he's good but tends to be a bit slow) or sit down and manually sift through the underwater cacophony yourself. Each ship has it's own distinctive sonar signature: surface contacts are represented on the display by green, submerged targets are blue, torpedoes turn up red and any aircraft are a fetching shade of purple.

With a bit of patience you'll soon be able to see what's happening around you from the patterns on the sonar gauge. Play Seawolf for a few weeks and you too can acquire the tremendously useful skill of being able to distinguish a missile cruiser from a battleship just by listening to the sound of its engines.

With digitised shipping, over 100 sampled sounds (including whalesong, eco-fans) and multi-player options (network, serial and modem links) SSN-21 Seawolf is a well presented and polished game. I imagine it's also a very accurate simulation of a nuclear sub but, like most submarine games, it just isn't wildly exciting.

Of course, Seawolf is a simulation and while the very nature of submarine warfare means you must stay undetected for as long as possible, like flying a stealth bomber it doesn't translate into exciting, action-packed gameplay.

Graphically there's not really much you can do to jazz up a 300 foot long tin can that doesn't have any windows and, as underwater warfare hinges on silence, loud stereo soundtracks aren't really a viable option. Nevertheless, EA have done a good job and Seawolf has rolling ocean waves, digitised speech and some nicely drawn high-resolution fractal maps (yes, really).

SSN-21 Seawolf is a complex and involving game. It's deep (geddit? Ho-ho), it's tactical and, after the initial skirmishes, it gets very difficult indeed. Although you can be sinking ships with your missiles five minutes after loading up the game, Seawolf is a game you'll have to work at if you want to get the best out of it. While Subwar 2050 soaks up the arcade slice of the sub warfare market, SSN-21 requires some real strategic thinking. It's like a deadly game of Chess — and you know how complicated Chess can be. Certainly Nigel Short does.

SSN-SEAWOLF

ELECTRONIC ARTS/IN-HOUSE

(0753) 549442

£44.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 7Mb of hard disk.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster, Roland, Gravis Ultrasound and Pro Audio Spectrum sound cards.

THE ***GOOD...***

- A realistic simulation of a nuclear-powered submarine.
- It's hugely involving and a tactical challenge.
- If you love accuracy in your sims you'll love this.

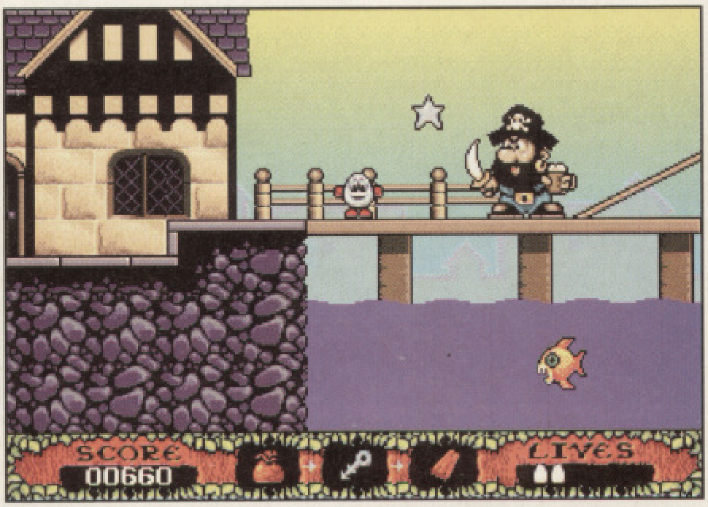
...AND THE ***BAD***

- For all its depth, it's not wildly exciting.
- Despite some nice touches and an overall veneer of slickness, graphically it's rather dull.

OVERALL

85%

David Upchurch goes to work on a Codemasters' egg.



Fantastic Dizzy

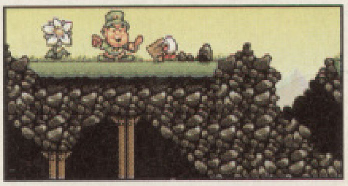
Nintendo has Mario, a moustachioed Brooklyn plumber with a fondness for magical mushrooms. Sega has Sonic, a spiky-haired hedgehog with supersonic capabilities. And what do the Codemasters have? An egg called Dizzy. Who can jump a bit. And pick up and carry objects. Suffice to say, Nintendo and Sega are not quaking in their boots.

Still, Dizzy hasn't done bad for himself, and he's enjoyed considerable success in his previous budget-priced outings. And now the egg with attitude is back in Fantastic Dizzy, his biggest adventure yet. It's his most technically advanced adventure too — 'out' are the flick-screen crudities of his earlier games and 'in' are smoothly scrolling backgrounds complete with a parallax effect.

This aside the basic formula remains the same as ever, with the ovoid hero jumping 'n' dodging naughty nasties, perilous pits and deadly traps as he attempts to rescue his girlfriend Daisy from the wizard Zaks.

There's the usual 'adventure' element too, with Dizzy having to collect and use the many strange objects he finds in order to get past certain obstacles or giant baddies. Again, this is nothing special, boiling down to lots of trudging between locations until you find the right item to solve a given problem.

Strangely, however, Fantastic Dizzy amounts to much more than the sum of its rather weak parts. It's simple and trivial yet still enjoyable, and as something for the 'younger' PC games-players out there to get their teeth into it can't be beaten.



SCORE
01080
LIVES

FANTASTIC DIZZY

CODEMASTERS/IN-HOUSE

(0926) 814132

£29.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

*THE **GOOD...***

- Colourful graphics and lots of cute characters to meet.

*...AND THE **BAD***

- Lacks depth and real challenge.

OVERALL

64%

David Upchurch re-evaluates a classic — through the... square Window.

Civilization

For Windows

God games don't come much more ambitious in scope than Civilization. Your mission, should you accept it, is to guide a tribe of settlers from primitive beginnings in the year 4000BC to high-tech glory in the 21st Century. Big enough challenge for you? Yup, I thought so.

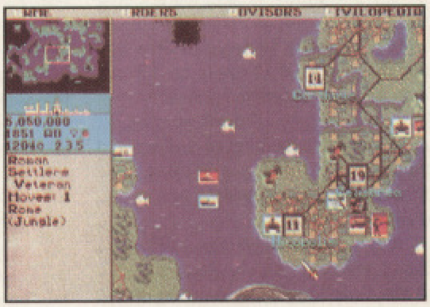
For its Windows incarnation Civilization has been spruced up with 256-colour graphics which, although much prettier than the DOS original's, are still largely perfunctory — the game lacks the visual splendour of something like Sim City 2000.

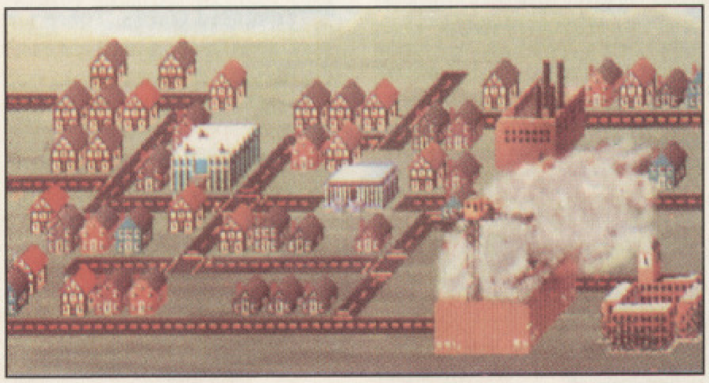
We note that your primitive civilization has not achieved Bronze Working. Perhaps you would care to exchange knowledge with us

But don't let that bother you — Civilization's appeal lies in its gameplay, not its graphics, and that's survived the transition intact and unchanged. Which, it has to be said, is a good thing — after all, there's no need fixing something that ain't broken, and Civilization's gameplay is the most, er, unbroken I've come across.

The task may seem daunting, but the game is so well designed that in practice it's all a lot easier than it sounds. You're lead through the early stages beautifully and taught the basics of researching inventions, city building and attacking rival tribes in a relatively painless manner, by which time you'll be well and truly hooked for life.

The only real criticism to make is that the game *does* needs a decent 486 to run at a moderately enjoyable pace. It *will* run on a 386, but be prepared for some hanging around for the game to catch up with your empire-building ambitions. Bet Napoleon never had these problems...





CIVILIZATION
For Windows

MICROPROSE/IN-HOUSE

(0666) 504326

£44.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster, Roland and any Windows-compatible soundcards.

*THE **GOOD...***

- Just as brilliant and enjoyable today as it ever was!

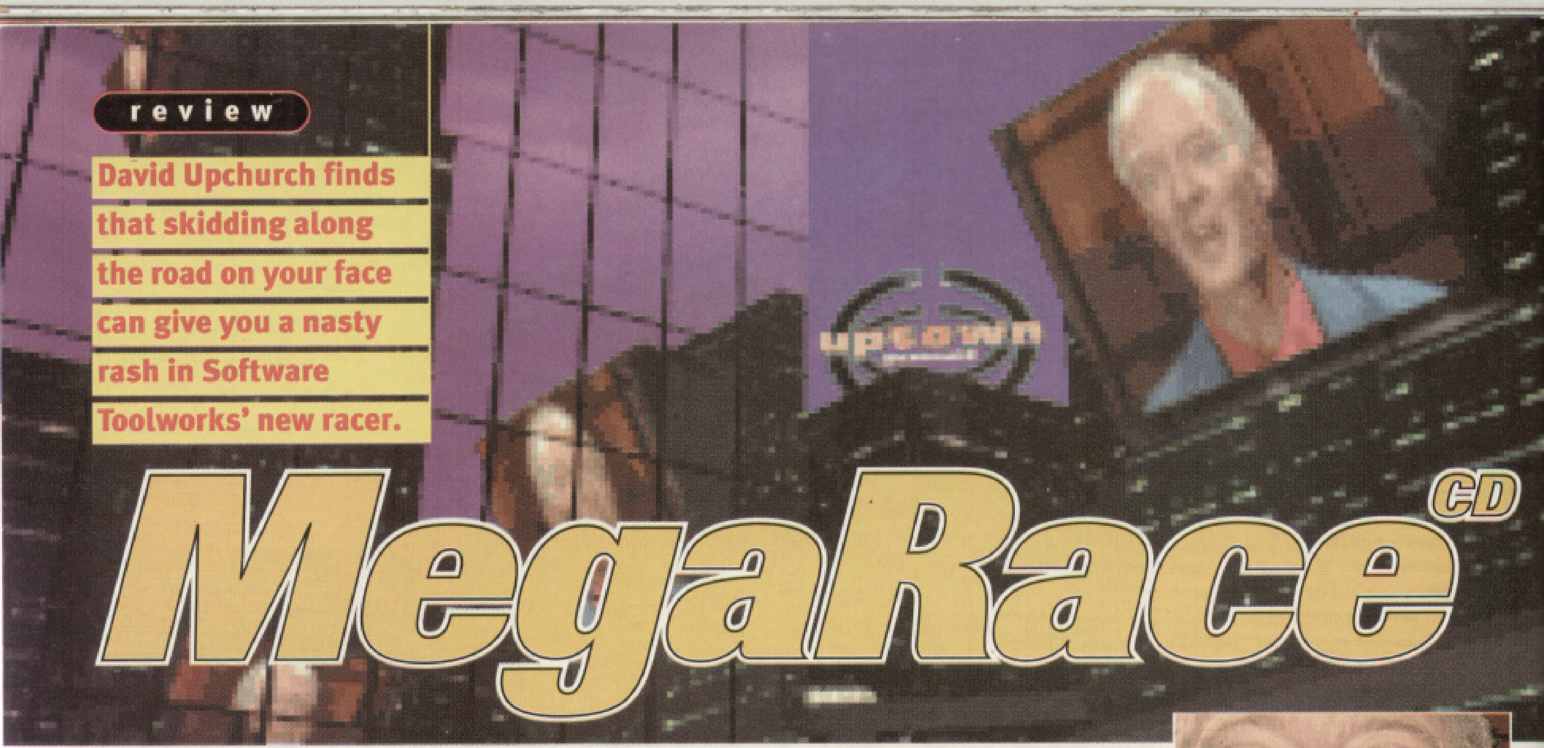
*...AND THE **BAD***

- Chugs quite badly on anything less than a 486.

OVERALL

89%

David Upchurch finds that skidding along the road on your face can give you a nasty rash in Software Toolworks' new racer.



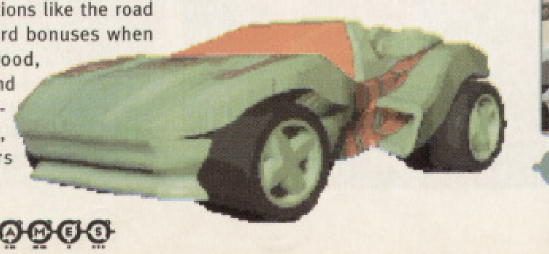
MegaRace CD

It is the not-too-distant future, and the world's TV-viewing billions are being kept glued to their screens by a new and ultra-violent gameshow — MegaRace. The show's format is simple: a member of Joe Public is picked at random to become the Enforcer, champion of the People.

Having selected a start-of-the-art roadster, it's the Enforcer's job to race at a lethal pace around sixteen of the most bizarre racetracks ever built. The aim? To win a place in the MegaRace Hall Of Ever-Lasting Fame — and a fantastic Star Prize into the bargain.

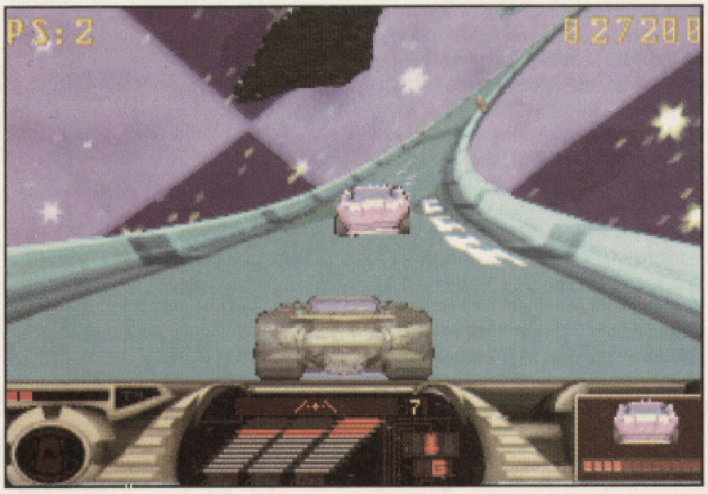
Alright, to tell the truth MegaRace isn't quite *that* simple. For a start, the Enforcer isn't alone on those high-speed highways — there are also psychotic streetpunks to contend with driving their own souped-up hotrods. Luckily, however, the Enforcer's car is fitted with front-mounted laser cannons as standard, with which he can blast the low-life scum off the road and into the gutter where they belong. And if he manages to waste enough of them in the time available then victory is his. But if he doesn't then the Enforcer's fifteen minutes of fame are up and all that remains is a one-way trip back into obscurity.

And even that's not the full story. The laser cannons are only good for a limited number of shots, and if they dry up the only way to ice the punks is by ramming them into the track walls or out-running them, both of which eat up valuable time. And on top of that there are further complications like the road markings which award bonuses when driven over, some good, such as speed-ups and smartbomb-like missiles, and some bad, like energy drainers and skid patches.



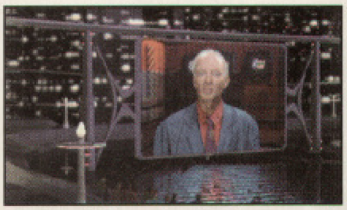
Yes, MegaRace is fast, violent and, most importantly as far as the show's audience viewing figures are concerned, deadly — at least, it would be if it was real. You see, MegaRace takes place in Virtual Reality, so all those spectacular exploding cars, mangled bodies and fantastic racetracks are nothing more than artificial constructions in a supercomputer's memory.

Not that this matters — everything looks and feels so convincing that it might as well be real. And on top of that there's the added advantage that morally-responsible types can crash and burn to their hearts' content, without having the guilt of murdering scores of their fellow human beings on their consciences (although Doom-freaks might find this aspect of the game something of a politically-correct cop-out).



(Above) Running over the road markings will reward you with a number of effects, not all of them good. There's even one that makes the screen go all wibbly-wobbly which is the last thing you need when racing along at two-zillion mph.

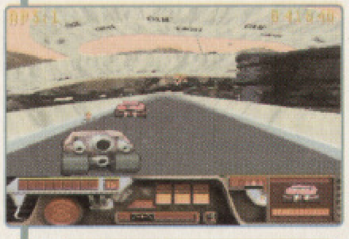
Hey-hey! It's Lance Boyle — the host with the most! His smarmy crapness is very amusing at first, but soon becomes rather tiresome. Luckily you can skip these bits if you want to.



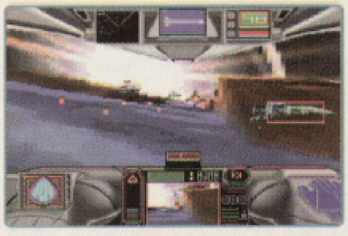
MegaRace is beamed to giant telescreens all over the globe so you can't escape from Lance no matter where you are. By the way, there are no prizes for spotting the game's obvious (and rather clichéd) Bladerunner inspirations.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

CyberRace and MegaRace have frighteningly similar gameplay elements and, hell, they even *sound* alike. But while CyberRace's 3D-generated landscapes may be very clever and allow the player total freedom of movement, they don't have the 'wow' factor of MegaRace's beautifully-depicted animated tracks. There are also more baddies to blast in CyberRace, yet it doesn't generate the same rush as MegaRace. Strange old world, isn't it?



MEGARACE...



...OUTPERFORMS CYBERRACE

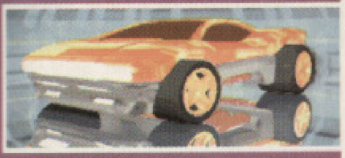
FANCY A **TEST DRIVE, SIR?**

Before each race you get the privilege of choosing your chariot for the battle to come. Each has varying performance characteristics and a number of added extras, though fluffy dice are sadly not available.

There are eight in all, although you can only choose from three at the start, with the rest made available as you progress through the game. Let's take a look at them, shall we? I'm sure we can find something to fit Sir's pocket...

JOSE

The Jose boasts good armour and shield capabilities, which just about makes up for the fact that it comes fitted with just one laser cannon and can't carry missiles. A good buy for fans of ramming and shunting.

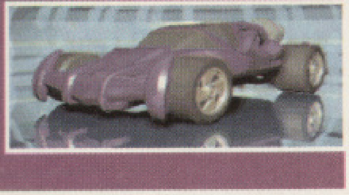


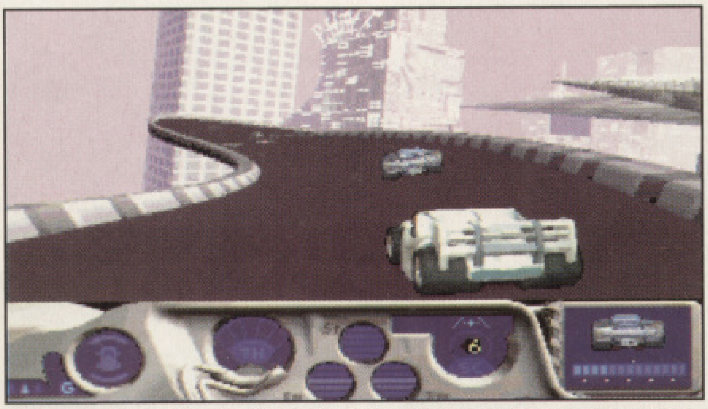
LUIS

Light on armour, the Luis is nippy little run-about that packs a punch thanks to its three laser cannons, though its compact design means that it can't carry missiles. Perfect for hit-and-run drivers.

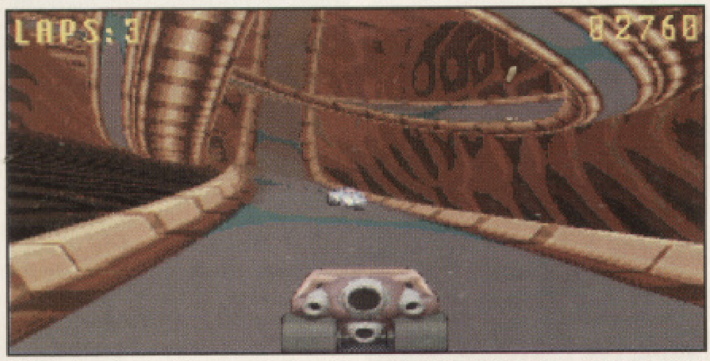
DUZBEL

Although impressively fitted with three laser cannon and slots for missiles, the Duzbel's heavy armouring make it slow off-the-mark which means it may have trouble getting within range of its would-be targets.

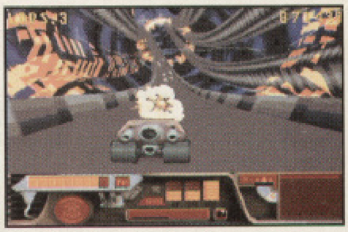




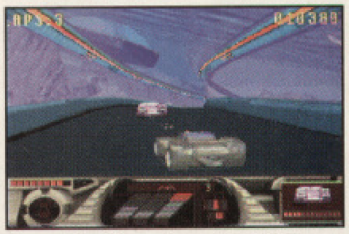
High over New San 2 with another streetpunk in your sights. The dashboard varies from car to car but provides near identical info, such as how fast you're going and energy remaining.



Playing MegaRace is often like going for a ride on a futuristic rollercoaster — except you don't have to put up with annoying kids screaming into your ear and waving their hands in the air.



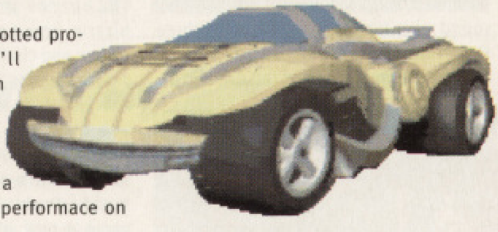
Take that! Good shooting, Tex — you're another piece of streetscum closer to that Star Prize. The enemy cars only appear one at a time, so there's no opportunity for doing anything clever like ramming one car into another. Pity.



The trouble with your lasers is that their range is *extremely* limited - you have to get right up close to your quarry before letting rip or else you'll just be frying tarmac.

This idea of having a computer game styled as a TV gameshow is nothing new and has been done contless times before. However, MegaRace does it better than most, and it's all thanks to the power of CD-ROM. The game's intro, for example, is an audio-visual feast, complete with full-screen animation and copious amounts of speech, as Lance Boyle (geddit?), the gameshow host from Hell, introduces you and the viewing millions to the game.

During the game hyper-active Lance pops up between each race to congratulate you wildly if you win or cry crocodile tears of fake sympathy if you lose. He's also on hand to give you a short preview of each track before you tackle it, as well as provide a potted profile of the punks you'll meet there. He'll even dish out special bonus prizes, like a dream holiday or a designer watch, but only if you chalk up a particularly spectacular performace on the track.



It all works so well that you could easily believe you were watching a real gameshow. In fact, it works a little *too* well, as Lance Boyle, who's probably best described as a cross between Bob Monkhouse and Hannibal Lecter overdosing on ProPlus, is a truly vile and nauseating specimen and his paper-thin charm soon wears very thin. Thankfully, a well-timed tap on the ESCAPE key will cut through his crap and get you straight back into the high-speed action.

Unlike all-too-many CD-based products, MegaRace isn't all front-end and no game. Admittedly, MegaRace doesn't boast the most complex gameplay ever — the player's controls are limited to just steering left and right, accelerating, decelerating and firing — but it's fun and very addictive all the same.

The tracks are varied and increase in difficulty perfectly, providing a well-judged challenge for every level of gamesplayer. And because the tracks are effectively animations pulled off the CD they look absolutely gorgeous too — the roller-coaster ride around high-rise New San 2 is amazingly effective at inducing nausea and has to be experienced to be believed.

However, the price for these good looks is high. Because you're racing over an animation, the amount of freedom of movement you have is limited — you can't turn around and race the 'wrong way' up the track, for example, or bring your car to a halt. The cars also have a tendency to look as if they're floating over the road rather than actually racing along on it, which rather spoils the feeling of 'being there' created so well by the rest of the game.

There are other niggles too, like the way there's only ever one other car on the road apart from yourself. Surely some 'innocent bystander' cars could have been included just to give you something to dodge in-between punk pulping? As it stands the repetitive chase-'n'-blast gameplay has a tendency to get a little boring.

Still, despite these faults, it has to be said that MegaRace is hugely enjoyable — in small doses, anyway. If you're looking for the perfect way to let off steam after a long evening with something more 'heavy duty' like Tornado, you could do a lot worse than this. Go on. Make the streets safe for decent folk — stay off the road.

MEGARACE CD

SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS/CRYO

(0444) 246333

£44.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards; joystick.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Just as much fun as you'd think blowing up cars would be.
- Absolutely stunning to look at and to listen to.
- Challenging for both arcade pros and novices.

...AND THE ***BAD***

- Simplistic and limited gameplay can result in boredom.
- It's official — MegaRace's host Lance Boyle is the most irritating game character ever.

OVERALL

80%

review

With a 'Hey-nonny' and a 'Tra-la-la', Dean Evans takes a bus-ride to Callahach to see a King, a faerie and a Dragonsphere.

Dragonsphere CD

After blowing up chickens in Rex Nebular and stalking through the sewers in Return Of The Phantom, MicroProse have leapt back into the graphic adventure scene with Dragonsphere, a fantasy, Hobbity-type tale that has dastardly plots, evil wizards and faerie kingdoms in generous abundance.

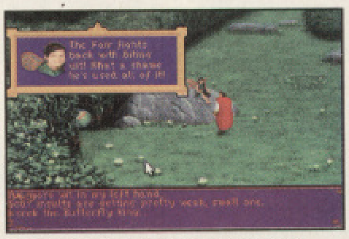
Dragonsphere is set in the kingdom of Callahach, once a quiet and peaceful place but now plagued by the evil Sanwe, a power-crazed sorcerer, town pillager and murderer. In short not the sort of guy you could borrow a jar of Gold Blend from.

When the sorcerer first appeared twenty years ago, the King and Ner-Tom, the court wizard, bravely rode out to invoke a spell that would imprison Sanwe in his tower for ever. Twenty years later, the magical shield still stands and, after the death of the King (your father), you have just been crowned the new ruler of Callahach.

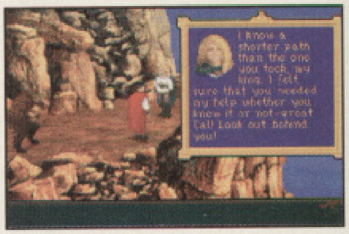
But there's trouble brewing. The Dragonsphere, a crystal globe encasing a dragon (which represents the shield encasing Sanwe), was created by Ner-Tom to warn the King should Sanwe ever try to break free and now, as the game begins, the sphere is beginning to crack. Oh dear...

Dragonsphere is fairly standard graphic adventure fare and if you've played any of Sierra's Kings Quest games, you'll have a good idea of how the game looks and feels. As Callash, the late King's son, your aim is to enter Sanwe's mountain fortress and kill him.

Of course, as he's practically indestructible you can't just skewer him with your sword, so first you must wander round your kingdom in search of three legendary stones of power which, rumour has it, can defeat the evil sorcerer. Yes, say a big hello to the sub-quests — the old "collect various items before you can reach the finale" ploy.



Dragonsphere looks and feels like Kings Quest but without all the drippy, cutesy sentimentality that marrs those games, although it has the occasional lapse into tweeness here and there.



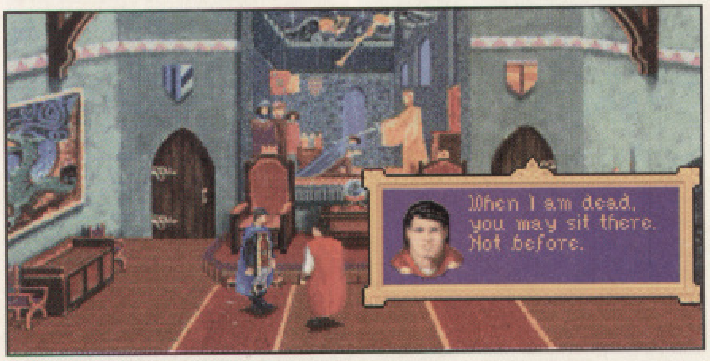
On a windswept promontory, our hero Callash is confronted by a beautiful woman and a hairy, fanged beast-type thing. I know which one I'd go for, though sadly you're not offered the choice.

Dragonsphere uses the same technology as Return of the Phantom but this time around it's all a bit tougher. The puzzles are difficult without being bizarre (there are two difficulty levels: novice and challenging) and the plot has more twists and turns than the Corkscrew at Alton Towers. Just when you think you know what's going on, just when you think you've finished it all, the whole shooting match is turned upside down and there's a whole new game to play. Maybe you're not the man you thought you were? (Cryptic, huh?)

Although the fantasy theme is a tried and tested formula, the animations and the backgrounds in Dragonsphere are absolutely wonderful. It's a shame the same can't be said of the dialogue which sits uneasily between high fantasy and your normal everyday chat. Some sentences sound like they've been plucked straight out of a Shakespearean play: "I'll thank you to watch your tone, sirrah! Good day." Er, right.

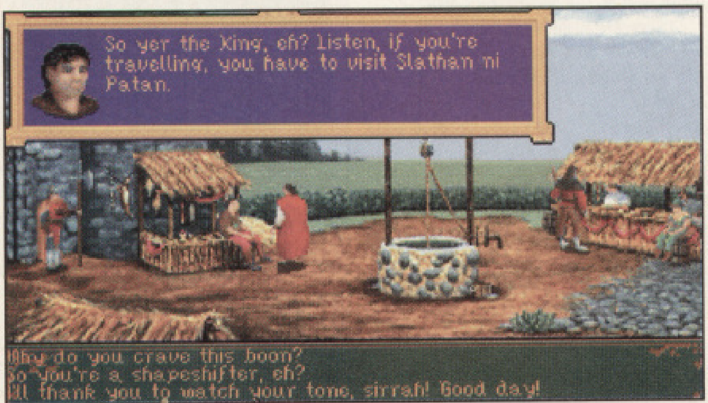
Of course, as this is a CD-ROM game (which is beautifully packaged in an attractive book format), it features digitised speech throughout but frankly, it's pretty crap. There's little life or passion in the acting and the acting is so woodenly it's as if MicroProse just dragged a few people in off the street, sat them down at a microphone and said "Read this script".

But these are all minor niggles and they shouldn't detract from the fact that Dragonsphere is a difficult and involving graphic adventure. If you can stomach the over-the-top fantasy language, this game will keep you playing for many a happy hour. And remember, defeating Sanwe isn't the half of it.



When I am dead, you may sit there. Not before.

Although the animations are very good, Callash strides around the gameworld as if someone's stuck a plank down the back of his tunic.



So yer the King, eh? Listen, if you're travelling, you have to visit Slathan ni Patan.

Why do you crave this boon?
So you're a shapeshifter, eh?
I'll thank you to watch your tone, sirrah! Good day!

The market-place is a valuable source of rumour, wild speculation and information. Feel free to have multiple-choice style conversations until they're coming out of your ears.

DRAGONSPHERE CD

MicroProse/In-house

(0454) 326532

£44.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards.

*THE **GOOD...***

- A beautifully drawn graphic adventure with some wonderfully animated characters and touches.
- Tough puzzles and lots of genuinely surprising plot twists to keep you on your toes.

*...AND THE **BAD***

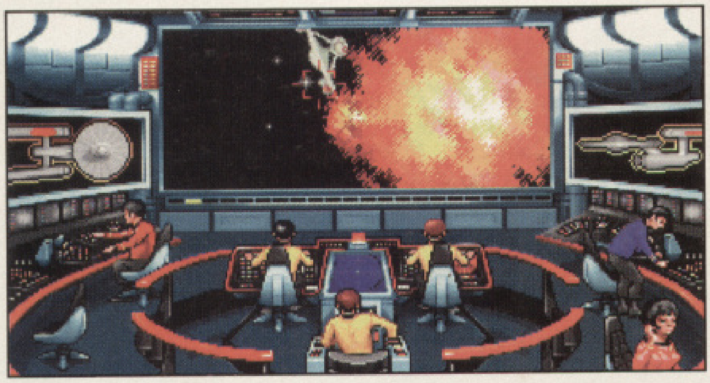
- Sometimes the gameplay is a little slow; moving around Callahach can be laborious and tedious.
- Sadly the digitised speech is probably the worst I've heard.

OVERALL

85%

David Upchurch and Interplay voyage beyond the Final Frontier — on CD!

Star Trek CD



Although the adventures of Jean-Luc Picard and his Next Generation cronies may have usurped those of Kirk, Spock, McCoy et al in the hearts of Trekkies afficionados everywhere, it seems there are still plenty of fans of the original TV show around — certainly so if the phenomenal sales of Interplay's Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary are anything to go by.

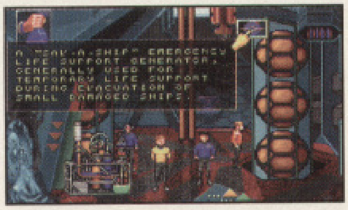
And now, two years after the game's original release on floppy, Interplay are offering you the chance to play it all over again — except this time on CD.

So what's new? Well, to be honest, almost nothing. The game's a graphic adventure in the LucasArts/Sierra mould, with the player guiding Kirk and his crew — typically Spock, Bones and a Bloke In A Red Top — as they solve problems, manipulate objects and chat to aliens.

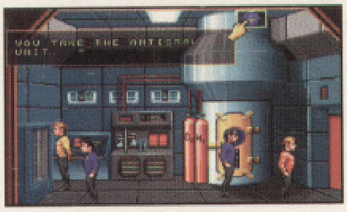
The game is split into seven self-contained mini-adventures or 'episodes', and this is arguably the game's main failing — because each episode only consists of a handful of locations to visit they're fairly easy to solve.

"So what's the point of having the game on CD then?" I hear you cry. Patience, for I am saving the best until last. You see, now the characters speak to you — and they're not the voices of any old Z-grade out-of-work actor either, they're the voices of the original cast! The difference this makes to the game's atmosphere has to be seen — or rather heard — to be believed.

Whether this makes Star Trek CD worth buying again if you already own it is debatable and probably depends on how much of a Trek fan you are, but if you've yet to sample its delights and don't mind its longevity problems then I recommend it highly.



A "MAK-A-SHIP" EMERGENCY LIFE SUPPORT GENERATOR, GENERALLY USED FOR TEMPORARY LIFE SUPPORT DURING EVACUATION OF SMALL DAMAGED SHIPS.



YOU TAKE THE ANTIGRAV UNIT.

STAR TREK CD

INTERPLAY/IN-HOUSE

(0865) 390029

OUT NOW £49.99

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Adlib and Roland soundcards.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Excellent atmosphere, mainly due to the use of original actors' voices.

...AND THE ***BAD***

- Experienced adventurers may find the fun's over all too soon.

OVERALL

82%

Cap'n Upchurch! Complicated historical trading game flying the Ascon flag off the starboard bow!

The Patrician CD

Ever fancied trading and bribing your way to the top of the Hanseatic League in Renaissance Era Europe? Thought not. Which is a bit of a pity, as that's the task that The Patrician sets you.

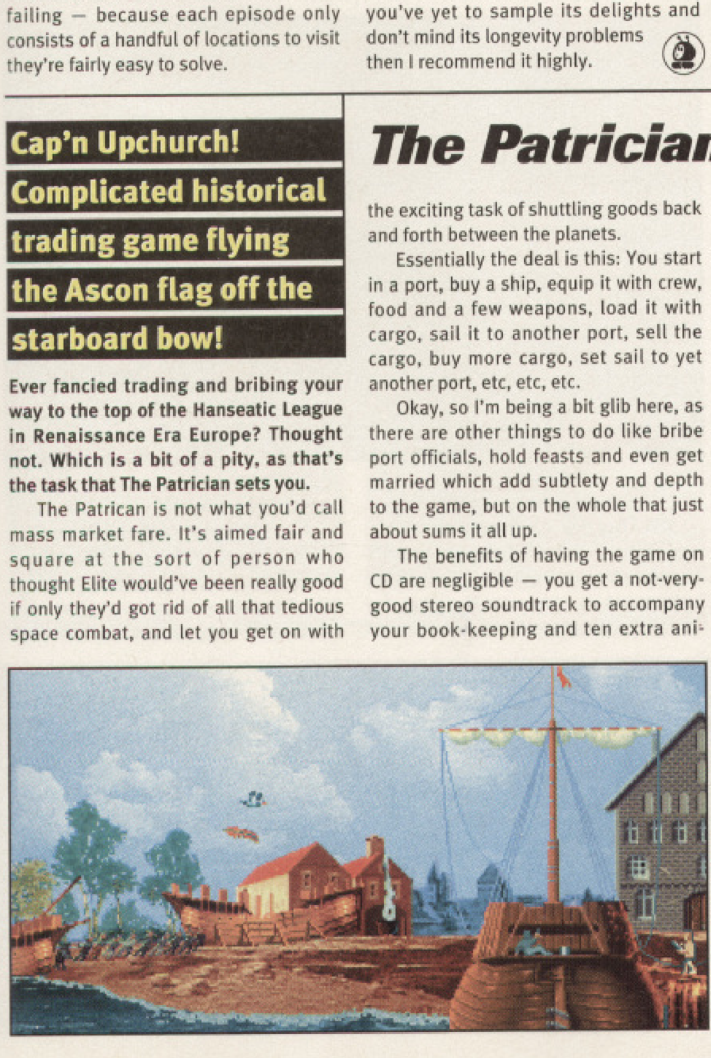
The Patrican is not what you'd call mass market fare. It's aimed fair and square at the sort of person who thought Elite would've been really good if only they'd got rid of all that tedious space combat, and let you get on with the exciting task of shuttling goods back and forth between the planets.

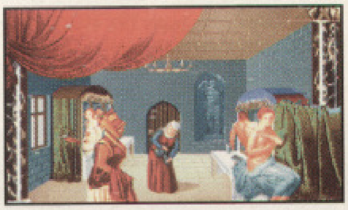
Essentially the deal is this: You start in a port, buy a ship, equip it with crew, food and a few weapons, load it with cargo, sail it to another port, sell the cargo, buy more cargo, set sail to yet another port, etc, etc, etc.

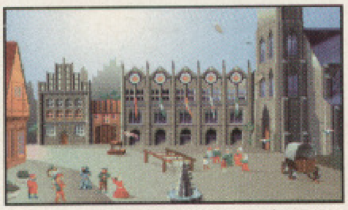
Okay, so I'm being a bit glib here, as there are other things to do like bribe port officials, hold feasts and even get married which add subtlety and depth to the game, but on the whole that just about sums it all up.

The benefits of having the game on CD are negligible — you get a not-very-good stereo soundtrack to accompany your book-keeping and ten extra animated scenes here and there. The main benefit is that you can play the game without losing too much of your hard drive space, a fact reflected in the low (for a CD game) price.

If ever there was a game deserving of the old reviewer's cliche "fans of the genre will love this" then surely The Patrican is it. However, even they might get a little tired of the eventual repetitiveness of the trading, while novices will surely find it all far too complicated to get into.







We've spared you The Patrician's boring text-filled screens and decided to show you the pretty ones instead.

THE PATRICIAN CD

ASCON/IN-HOUSE

(071) 328 2762

OUT NOW £39.99

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster and Adlib soundcards.

THE ***GOOD...***

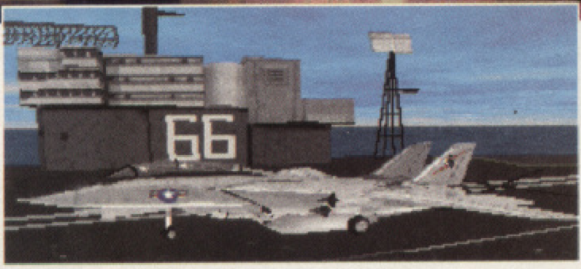
- To say this packs a long-term challenge is an understatement.

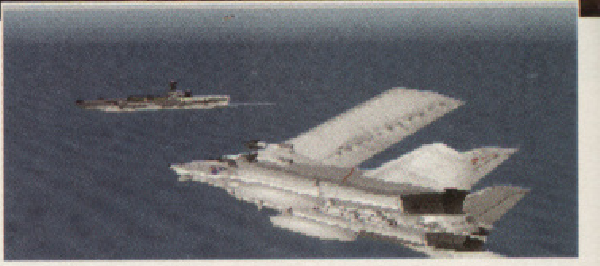
...AND THE ***BAD***

- Too top heavy to attract beginners and too 'samey' to keep fans gripped.

OVERALL

52%





(Right) The F14 Tomcat is a bulky, two-seater fighter and like any modern flight sim, the game boasts a wealth of nifty external views.

(Far right) F14 features fully texture mapped aircraft - good-looking, aren't they?

F14 Fleet Defender

Alex 'Flyboy' Fraser straps himself into the pilot's seat of MicroProse's latest sim and aims to become a Top Gun.

The F-14 isn't a plane you hear a lot about really. Except, that is, when it had its single moment of cinematic glory way back in 1986, when Tom Cruise flew one around a series of beautiful sunset scenes in the movie Top Gun. Now MicroProse give you the chance to do the same, right down to the sunsets — although you don't get to snog Kelly McGillis.

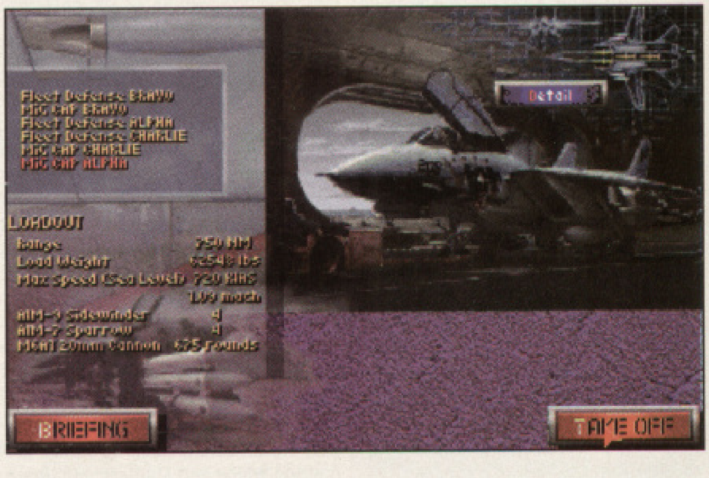
It has to be said that on the flight sim front MicroProse have had their ups and downs over the last couple of years. They've been itching to get back to the number one spot, and Fleet Defender is their prime contender to help them do it. They've overhauled the standard graphics of old and gone heavy on the realism thing, like they did ages ago with F-19.

The only problem is that, like the F-19, this isn't a plane that likes to be flown. At all. I mean, practically every time you do a turn you start to stall — it's a long way off from the get-up-and-go flying of Falcon 3.0 or TFX, that's for sure.

One advantage of this is that you get far nearer to your enemy than you might otherwise because you end up going so slowly half the time. On one occasions I had a MiG so close that I could practically see inside his cockpit. Shame the navigator didn't have a camera handy to record the moment for posterity...

Graphically F-14 is pretty nice to look at. The cloud layers are done well, the carrier you fly from looks good and even the other planes are better than previous effort from these guys. You still get the impression that their planes are Blue Peter models made out of a couple of shoe boxes Sellotaped together but now, at least, they're coloured-in nicely.

It's a pity you don't really get a good look at them when you're flying, though. The cockpit gives lousy visibility with the instruments up and, worse than that, the instruments themslves are almost



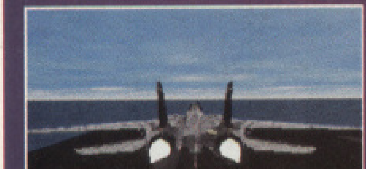
Fleet Defense BRAVO
MiG CAP BRAVO
Fleet Defense ALPHA
Fleet Defense CHARLIE
MiG CAP CHARLIE
MiG CAP ALPHA

LOADOUT

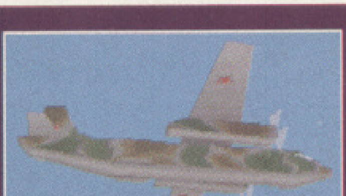
Range	750 NM
Load Weight	62548 lbs
Max Speed (Sea Level)	720 KIAS 1.09 mach
AIM-9 Sidewinder	4
AIM-7 Sparrow	4
M61A1 20mm Cannon	675 rounds

All the briefing screens are beautifully presented using some attractive hand-drawn artwork. Once you have picked the squadron you'll fly for, be it the Ghostriders or the Pukin Dogs (all authentic F14 squadron names), it's time to nip up to the catapult.

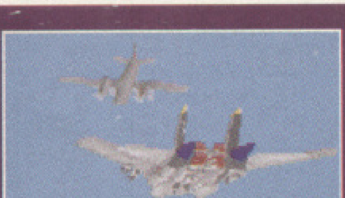
IN THE NAVY!



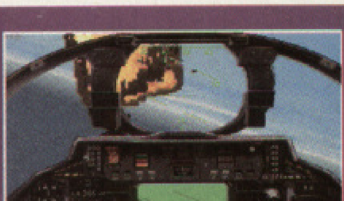
The start of another glorious day flying for the Navy and — boy! — do they start early. I didn't even have time for my bacon and eggs. Ah well, a few kills will cheer me up...



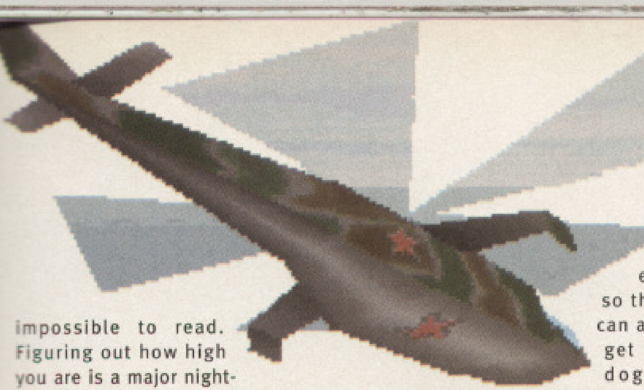
And here's Kill Number One. Only halfway through my patrol and I've already got my first contact — a fat cargo plane just waiting to be blown from the air. Should be a cinch.



Fat fool — he hasn't seen me yet. So I'll just sneak into position behind and below him and flip the big red activate button on my main guns. He-he-he...



The poor sap tries a few fancy evasive manoeuvres but they're of no use against me, matey-boy. A couple of squeezes on the fire button and he's done for.



impossible to read. Figuring out how high you are is a major nightmare, and since crashing into the sea is an upsetting experience for anybody I'm a bit surprised MicroProse haven't done anything about it.

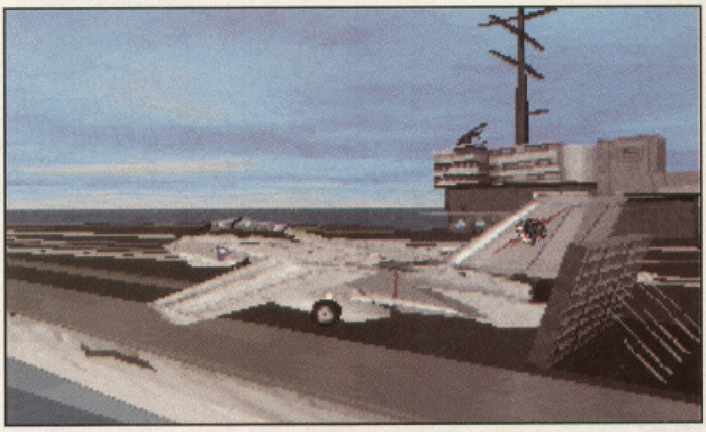
All in all, then, if it's such an infuriating beast to fly, is there any reason to rush out and grab a copy? Well, yes. MicroProse haven't been flight sim experts for donkey's years for nothing. The flight model may be ropey but the challenge is still there, especially since the enemy pilots MicroProse throw at you are amazingly good at higher difficulty levels. I do wonder, however, why the Soviet forces use pilots that fly transport planes exactly the same way they fly the small fighters!

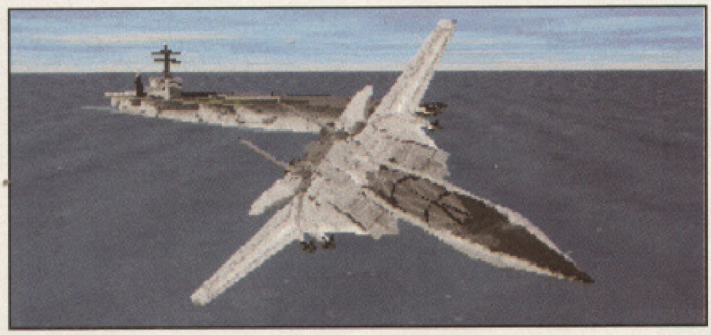
Then there's the fact that the F-14 is a two-seater plane, and the designers have done their darnest to make that fact count. To dogfight you're better off in the pilot's seat, but can't find the enemy so that you can actually get into a dogfight? Then zip into the navigator's regulation Navy boots and check out the radar. Nice touch, boys, and well put together too. It adds atmosphere to have messages from the guy behind you rather than some faceless radio-man back at base.

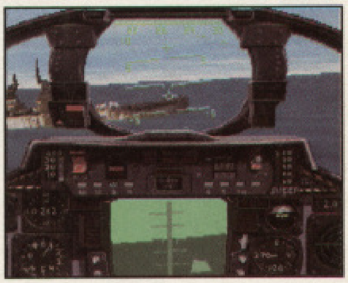
And, on top of that, the Fleet Defender design team have been up all night putting together a really nifty set of options for you to fiddle with between sorties. You can set yourself to go for a quicky dogfight with all sorts of opponents, or you can team up full-time with a navigator (inevitably called something like 'Goose' or 'Iceman') and head out on a campaign. The campaigns are good stuff, with plenty of places and situations to choose from, and the outcome of each battle affects how the next one you fight starts. Very nice. If only the actual time spent behind the joystick was as well conceived then this could have been a monster of a game.

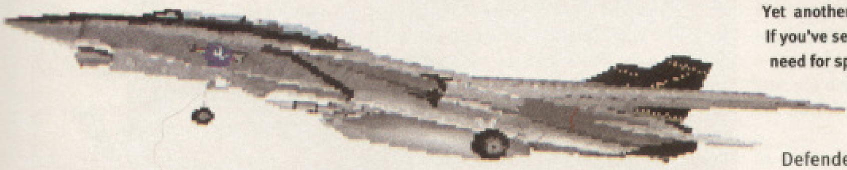
It's sad, really, because there's a lot going for F-14. Trouble is, it just gets blown out of the skies by the likes of the stunning-to-fly TFX. Unfortunately, what with all the faffing around in different views to see where you are and falling out of the skies just because you tried for a tight turn, F-14 Fleet Defender definitely *won't* Take Your Breath Away.

Getting into a heated firefight, chasing in and out of the clouds on a stormy afternoon and buzzing heaps of enemy planes is still a fast and furious business, don't get me wrong. It's just that other sims are a shade faster and a touch more furious. I know it's a modern jet sim with missiles and the ever-helpful head-up display, but perhaps you'd be better sticking to your guns and hanging on for Pacific Air War instead.





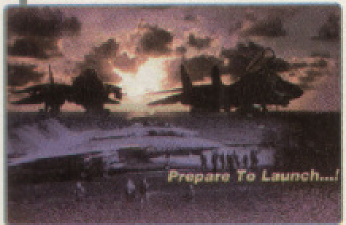




Yet another of F14's stunning external views. If you've seen Top Gun and feel the need, the need for speed, we're afraid only pilots who can sing romantic harmonies need apply.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Fleet Defender is what F-15 Strike Eagle III could've been when it came out last year, boasting better graphics, loads of options and an excellent campaign system to boot. F-15 may have tickled your fancy in 1993, and if you like having your fancy tickled then F-14 is just the thing for 1994.



F-14 IS...

F-15 FOR '94!

The boys back at the control tower confirm another kill for the ace. Thanks for the medal — just chuck it in the box with the rest of 'em and I'll look at it later..

As the sun goes down on yet another day of top-quality flying, it's time to head home, park the car on the tarmac and pop indoors to watch the debrief highlights.

F-14 FLEET DEFENDER

MICROPROSE/IN-HOUSE

(0454) 326532

£44.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 6Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; joystick.

THE GOOD...

- The pilot/navigator split makes the game feel that bit different.
- Loads of varied campaigns from South American jungles to the Norwegian coast.
- Very pretty to look at, especially if you're flying during a sunset.

...AND THE BAD

- Frustratingly, it's tough to see what you're doing.
- Even more frustratingly, the F-14 flies like a sack of bricks.

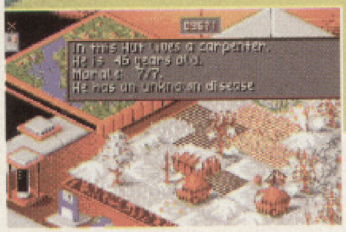
OVERALL

81%

review

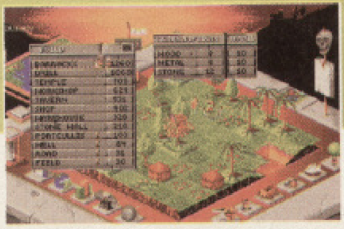
Mindscape have taken a bold step into the big, bad world of God games with their latest offering. Alex Fraser casts a watchful eye over the results...

Genesia

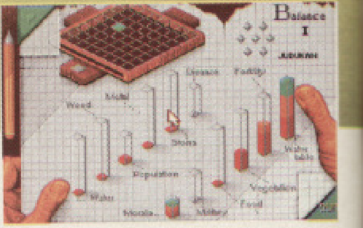


In this Hut lives a carpenter.
He is 46 years old.
Morale: 7/7.
He has an unknown disease.

During the winter all outside workers down shovels and go indoors. So, your previously budding fields and buildings in mid-erection get shelved for a season. Incidentally, it's always the happy ones who fall ill...



As long as you have an architect and the necessary raw materials, any one of these buildings can be yours. Trouble is, you need a drill to get stone; but you also need stone to build a drill. Lateral thinking is called for...



Graphs like this can be displayed to give you an idea of your people's status. After the initial urgency of building a well and beginning a farm, it's then important to keep an eye on the disease count.

For a small child first venturing out into the big, wide world, meeting people and taking in the surroundings can be a harrowing experience. For a young race of people setting its foot on the very first rung of the ladder of civilization, the experience can be much the same. All too soon there will come a time when meeting other races and cultures is unavoidable — and you can bet the encounter won't be for something as friendly as borrowing a cup of sugar.

Thus the cut-and-thrust world of Genesia is a potentially harrowing one for its inhabitants. Any tribe living there must not only educate itself but also learn how to design and build housing, locate, kill and cook food, invent forms of transport — and all these things must happen very quickly if its people are to survive and prosper.

Still, with your good self as their leader, they should have no problems, right? Er, right...

The world of Genesia is populated by three different races, each controlled either by a human player or by your PC. Each is given a small area of land, positioned strategically away from the other players, along with some basic materials to get them going. After taking a quick scout around your land, you need to put your mind in the frame of an explorer, setting up camp and providing for the needs of your people. Don't worry — yes, it's technical, but it's pretty intuitive with it. At first your priorities are to build houses and hunt and fish for food, two activities which your people can do without much guidance.

If you've played Populous or Populous 2, you've already seen much of what Genesia has to offer. It's quite easy to knock it because of this, but then the main attraction of Populous is its timelessness, and Genesia certainly captures the same quality atmosphere of Bullfrog's game. As you would hope – or even expect — though, there are several features that set it apart from the rest of the crowd.

The first: inventions. The idea of inventing things isn't a new one, but Genesia offers you a lot of control over the inventing process. Before you can build a battery, for example, you have to 'discover' physics — that is, set a number of your colonists to work out the laws of physics for themselves. Assigning the right number of people to different inventions is something that will take you some time to work out, but trial and error will make it happen.

Second: a goal. The main aim of Genesia is to collect seven jewels which have been scattered about the kingdom before your opponents can get to them. They could be anywhere, so you need to build transportation to actually get out and look for them. An interesting addition to the God-game genre.

Also, methods of transportation: if you want to bomb a neighbouring village, your best bet is to make a hot-air balloon — but the idea for that only comes after you've built a boat. And then, of course, you have to invent explosives...

Graphically, Genesia is really excellent. The four seasons are well-represented, with snow and ice forming on the ground in winter, and autumn leaves falling to create a warm glow on the ground. In each of the seasons the landscape scrolls around smoothly, showing you the small-but-well-defined buildings and people. Unlike Populous, Genesia enables you to look inside the buildings which you've created, to actually interact with the populace rather than merely control them.

The icon-driven interface works well, and control is intuitive. However, getting into the game can be difficult because you're given no clues: just a race of people and a manual, something which might freak you out if you're not of a strategic bent.

Genesia can be best summed up as an interesting and clever mix between Populous, Civilization and Blue Byte's Amiga title The Settlers, which is also due to hit the PC soon. If you haven't played those games then that's unlikely to help you; but if you have any inkling at all for strategy gaming, you're not likely to come unstuck with Genesia.

GENESIA

Mindscape/Microids

(0444) 246333

£34.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 3Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

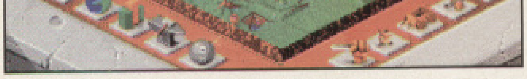
- A combination of several game styles, which gel together well.
- Very deep, making for a long lasting and hugely involving challenge that'll keep you going for *months*.

...AND THE BAD

- Somewhat derivative of other God games.
- Initial instructions are poor, so getting into the game can take some time.
- The graphics, although attractive in places, look a bit old-fashioned.

OVERALL

83%



As you while away the time tilling land and cutting trees, it's likely that your neighbours will be building a thriving metropolis – this picture giving you an example of their already-large village.

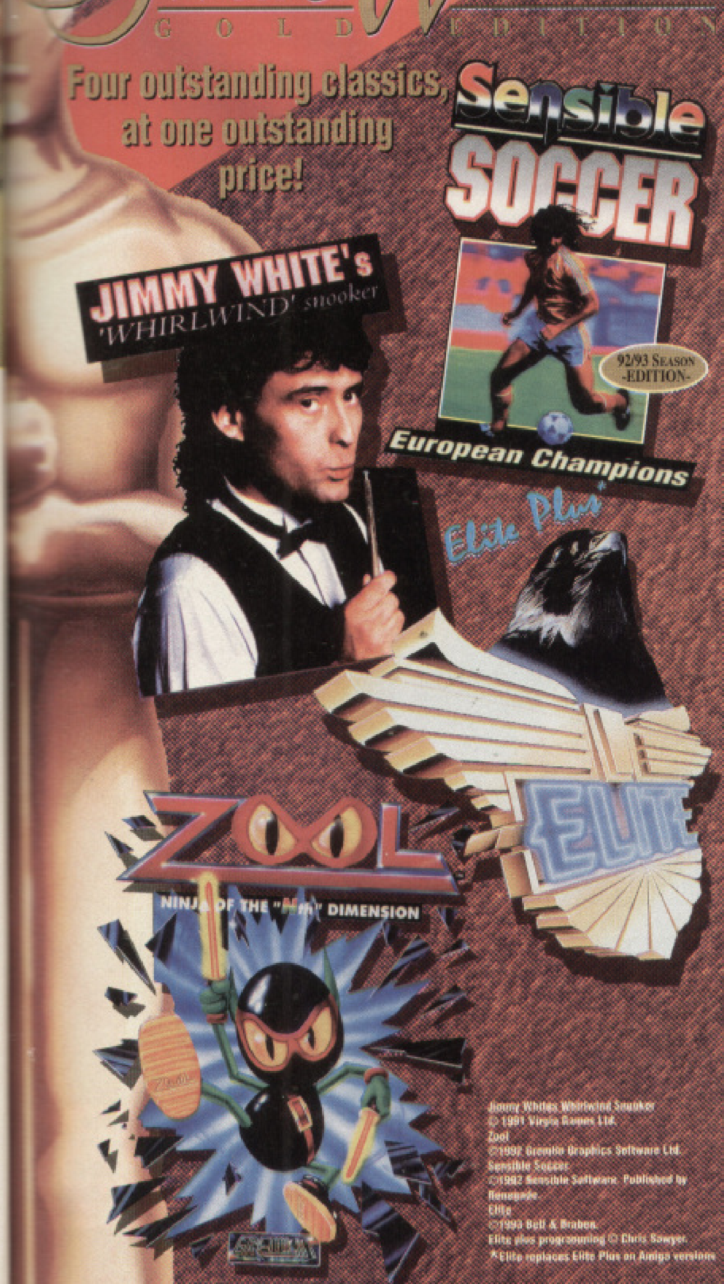
08411
I'M BUSY INVENTING
28

In the workshop your inventor can get busy, er, inventing things. When something is 100% invented, you can turn a settler into a blacksmith to actually make it – but it all takes time.

Award Winners

GOLD EDITION

Four outstanding classics, at one outstanding price!



Sensible SOCCER
92/93 SEASON -EDITION-
European Champions
JIMMY WHITE'S 'WHIRLWIND' snooker
Elite Plus*
ELITE
ZOOL
NINJA OF THE "Nth" DIMENSION

Jimmy Whites Whirlwind Snooker
© 1991 Virgin Games Ltd.
Zool
©1992 Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd.
Sensible Soccer
©1992 Sensible Software. Published by Renegade.
Elite
©1993 Bell & Braben.
Elite plus programming © Chris Sawyer.
*Elite replaces Elite Plus on Amiga versions

SENSIBLE SOCCER

"Definitely, without the merest inkling of a suggestion of a shadow of a doubt, the best football game ever." Amiga Power - 93%

JIMMY WHITES WHIRLWIND SNOOKER

Impressive as the 3D is, it's only one aspect of a game chockfull of brilliant features. PC Review 9

ELITE-ELITE Plus

"Quite simply the most original game-play since the birth of computer entertainment. An all time classic. PC Format.

ZOOL

"Zool conforms in every way to what you'd expect from a perfect cutesy platform game. And in doing so has become the perfect platform game... if you like all things cute and colourful, you'll love this, and if you aren't predisposed to platform games you'll still love it." Amiga Format Gold 95%

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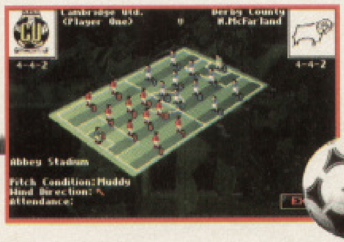
club football - THE MANAGE

can

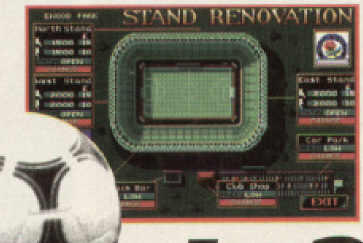


Cambridge Utd.
(Player One)
0
Derby County
R.McFarland
4-4-2
4-4-2
Abbey Stadium
Pitch Condition:Muddy
Wind Direction:
Attendance:
EX

you

actual VGA screens

manage



STAND RENOVATION
North Stand
West Stand
East Stand
OPEN
Car Park
Club Shop
EXIT

it?

Football Management the way it really is - have you got the tactical brain of George Graham, can you motivate like Kenny Dalglish and above all are you a winner like Alex Ferguson? Pit your wits against the rest and build a dynasty.

THIS HAS IT ALL

The Tactician

Select your team and play the transfer market using real player data to make your decision. Know the skill level of your team. Deal with varying weather conditions. Review the comprehensive and detailed statistics to plan your progress when you need to.

The Coach

Organise your coaching and training. Get your scouts "on the ground" invest in your youth team and nurse your injury list back to full fitness.

The Manager

Deal with full post-match newspaper reports on your performance. Take tough decisions, deal with your chairman, sponsors and fans.

The Business man

Negotiate your contract, look after yourself and make sure your're the boss of your own destiny

The Winner

You're a 35 year old new boy - how long is it going to take you to get promotion, fill up your trophy cabinet and mastermind your assault on the European scene. Your time is up after 30 seasons at the top.

We have managed to create with ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE a living, breathing universe of club management.

CAN YOU MANAGE IT?

IBM PC available in May RRP £34.99

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ENTERTAINMENT
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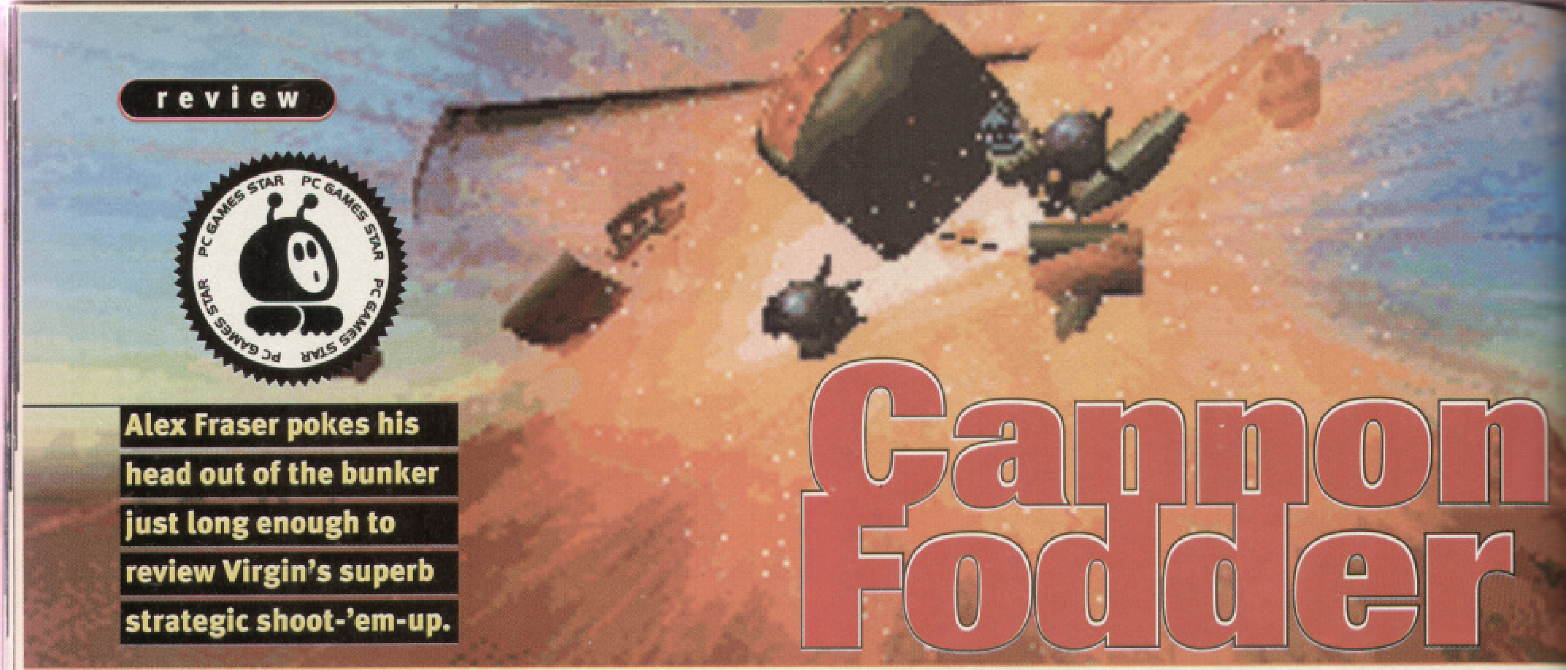
The Software Business
0480 496497



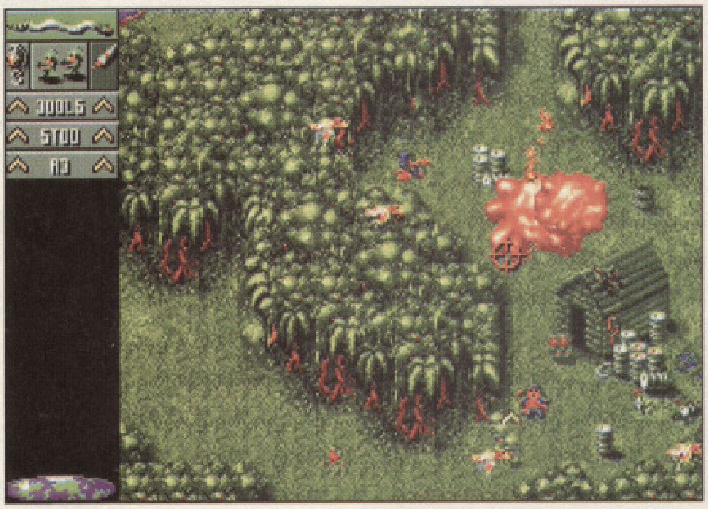
Cannon Fodder

Alex Fraser pokes his head out of the bunker just long enough to review Virgin's superb strategic shoot-'em-up.

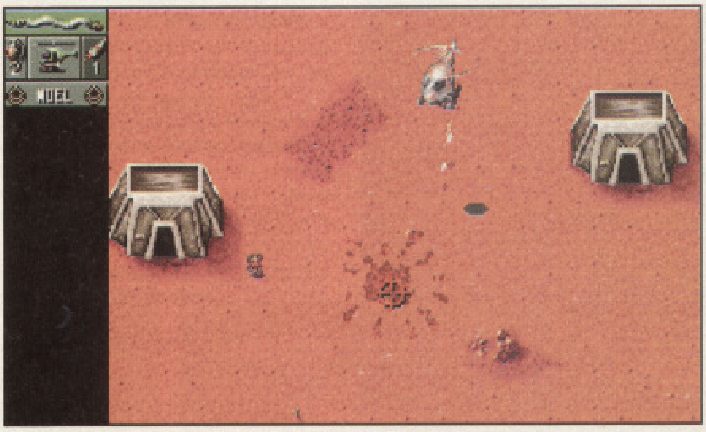
I am not what you'd call a violent person. In fact, some might go so far as to say I'm a bit of a coward. Should the ugliness of a fight erupt in a pub, for example, then I'm the first to run and hide in the toilets — usually the Ladies' in fact, as there's less chance of the thugs rough-housing in the bar finding you there. Oh, they might have no qualms about sticking broken bottles in each other's faces, but entering the Ladies' toilet is another matter entirely.

So I'm not the most obvious candidate, perhaps, for reviewing Virgin's Cannon Fodder, a game where the player's sole aim is to kill literally hundreds of people in cold blood. But — hey! — a man's gotta review what a man's gotta review, so like the true professional I am I sat down at my PC, grasped the mouse, gritted my teeth, forgot my morals and got on with the job.

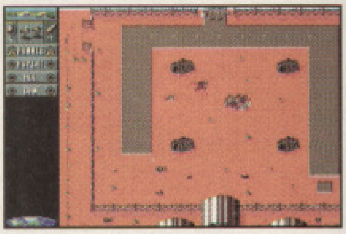
However, after a couple hours of shooting, maiming and blowing up the enemy's forces, I suddenly realised that I was (gulp!) actually enjoying myself — and quite a lot too. According to Sensible Software, the game's creators, war has never been so much fun — and I'm afraid I've got to agree with them.



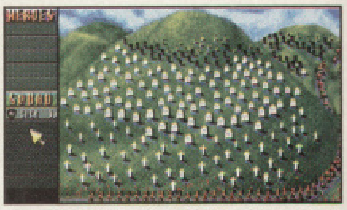
As your soldiers wander around, the screen scrolls super-smoothly in all directions to follow their progress. The scenery is completely interactive — you can hide in fox-holes and even blow up any threatening-looking trees. So hurrah for that.



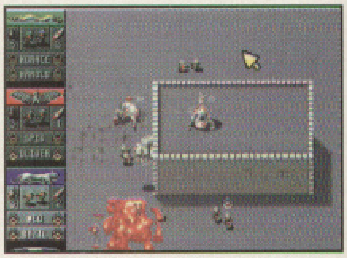
The helicopters are great fun. Because you're airborne that means you're well out of range of the ground-based troops' fire, so you can run amok without fear of reprisal. All you need to do now is put a bit of Wagner on your CD player , crank up the volume to max and you're away.



A level map can be called up at any time. However, while it shows the positions of any major enemy bases, it doesn't show the location of individual troops so its use is limited.



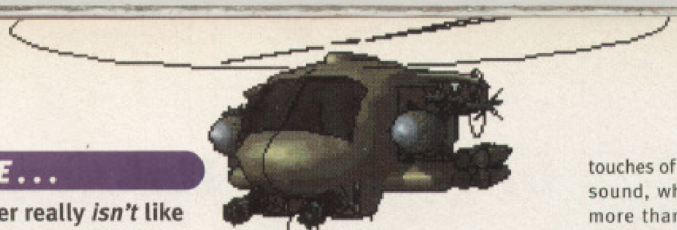
After each mission you're rewarded with fifteen new recruits and also treated to the sobering sight of Boot Hill, where the bodies of those who have fallen in battle are buried.



If you wish you can split your squad into a maximum of three smaller-sized units, allowing you to set up some highly tactical manoeuvres. Any units not under your direct control will enter 'self defence' mode, digging in and sniping at any enemy soldiers who wander within range.

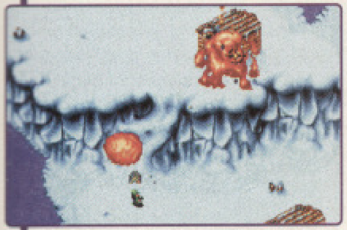
Cannon Fodder is not a game that's easily pigeon-holed. It's sort of a wargame... except it's not. And it's sort of a shoot-'em-up... except it's not. And it's sort of a puzzle game... except it's not. What is IS, however, is a superbly-balanced blend of all three very different game styles, resulting in an experience that's completely unique and enormously enjoyable to boot.

In Cannon Fodder you're cast as the commander of a platoon of small (but perfectly formed) soldiers who you must attempt to guide safely through 24 increasingly-dangerous missions, each of which consists of several self-contained 'phases' or sub-missions. Usually your mission objectives are brutally simple: destroy all the enemy's troops and installations — although there is the occasional hostage rescue thrown in just for a bit of light relief.



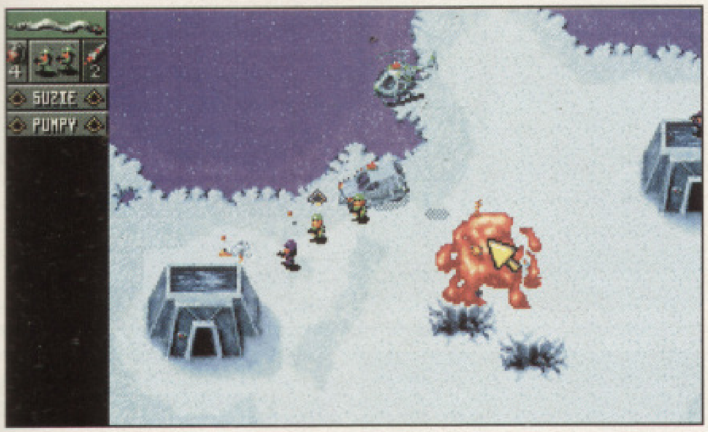
IT'S A BIT LIKE...

I'm in trouble here, because Cannon Fodder really *isn't* like any other game around at the moment. However, if pushed to make a comparison (as I am in order to fill this panel) I'd have to say it's got several similarities to Lemmings, especially in the latter stages where some intense brain-straining is required to get your troops through the missions unscathed. Graphically there are links too, although I don't recall quite as much blood and gore in Lemmings...



CANNON FODDER...

...LEMMINGS WITH GUNS?



If you want to get an idea of how hectic Cannon Fodder can get, then take a look at this - your squad of two men is being attacked by a chopper, a jeep and some enemy troops. Fair? Oh yes.

In each mission you control a handful of men, typically no more than five, each armed with a machine gun and a couple of grenades and rockets. It's not a lot, but despite this disgraceful lack of firepower your brave boys will courageously carry out your every order to the letter, even going so far as to walk into minefields or off the edges of cliffs should you ask them to.

Should you fail your mission — which is a nice way of saying that you all your men have been killed — then more troops will be drafted into service from your reserves and you can have another crack at it until you either succeed and move onto the next mission or you run out of reserves, ending the game.

All sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Ha! Don't be fooled. Agreed, the game starts off easy, with the player required to do little more than run around and shoot things. Indeed, the first two or three missions are a breeze, and you'd have to be the games-playing equivalent of Eddy 'The Eagle' Edwards not to get through them with most of your men unharmed. It's only then, however, when you're starting to get all cocky and over-confident, that you realise you've been lead through a cunningly thought-out basic tutorial and that the *real* fight is just beginning.

Complications, like missile-firing choppers and impregnable gun turrets are gradually introduced, and the initial anarchic shoot-'em-up action slowly gives way to even more enjoyable strategic planning. Come the tenth mission, by which time your men will probably have the life expectancy of a cream cake at a Weight Watchers meeting, you'll be desperately grateful for the 15 new recruits that enlist and swell your reserves after each successfully completed mission.

The final stages of the game are nightmarishly tough, yet not frustratingly so. This is undoubtedly due to the inspired control system where everything, from running and shooting to launching grenades and driving tanks, is accessed via one or two mouse clicks — there's no faffing about with tiny icons or pull-down menus or anything as cumbersome as that.

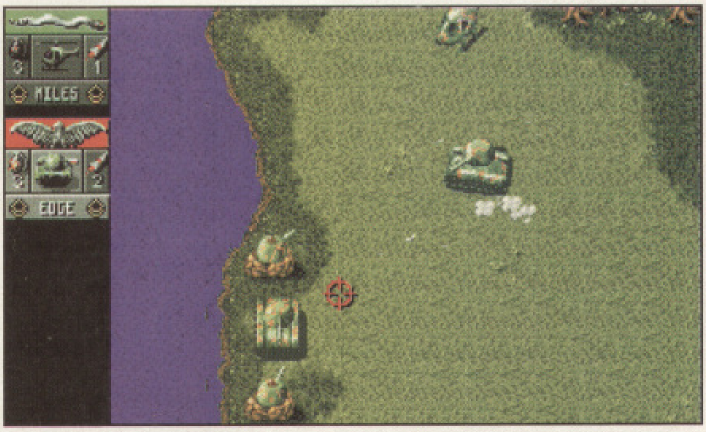
To move your troops, for example, you simply point at where you want your lads to go and then click with the left mouse button. Likewise, pointing at targets and clicking with the right button will make your troops fire their guns, while holding down both mouse buttons will launch a grenade or a rocket.

On the later levels you'll discover abandoned tanks, jeeps and helicopters just begging to be commandeered, yet the control remains as elegantly simple as ever. All it takes is a couple of mouse clicks to climb aboard and then you can zip about. Easy, as they say, peasy.

So, when your boys bite the big one you really have no-one to blame but yourself. Which means that you'll want to have another go. Only this time, of course, you'll do better. Then you'll have another go. And another. And another. And suddenly it's 4a.m. and you realise you've been playing Cannon Fodder non-stop for ten hours. Be warned — this is addictive stuff.

There's so much in Cannon Fodder that's good. No, strike that, because 'good' isn't strong enough — try 'brilliant'. Like the gorgeous animation of the tiny sprites. And the tongue-in-cheek, sometimes black — sick even — touches of humour throughout. Even the sound, which in most games is little more than a hastily bolted-on afterthought to give you something to listen to, is an integral part of the game and an essential aid to survival — should you hear the distant thwocka-thwocka-thwocka of rotors, for example, you'll know a chopper attack is on the way.

I could fill five times the space I've got here with good things to say about Cannon Fodder but sadly all I have are two pages — we do have to review the other not-so-brilliant games, you know. So let me end with the best thing I can say about Cannon Fodder: buy it.



If you come across any abandoned vehicles feel free to hop in and go for a ride. It's best not to put all your chaps in one basket, however, because should the enemy blow the vehicle up all the passengers will go with it.

CANNON FODDER

VIRGIN/SENSIBLE SOFTWARE

(081) 960 2255

£35.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Soundblaster, Adlib and Roland soundcards.

THE *GOOD...*

- Inspired and fantastically addictive mix of blasting and puzzle solving.
- Hugely playable thanks to the elegant and well-implemented control system.
- Packed with humour and some hilarious — though some might say sick — animations.

...AND THE *BAD*

- Does get *very* demanding in the later missions, both mentally and physically.

OVERALL

92%

review

Dean Evans bravely defends the Earth from little green men in MicroProse's UFO.

UFO: Enemy Unknown

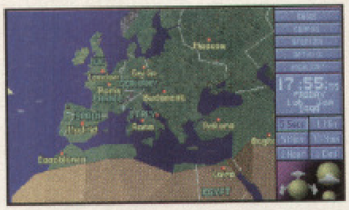
Mystery and legend still surround the whole UFO phenomenon. Do they really exist? In MicroProse's UFO the answer is a big 'yes' because you take command of Xcom, a secret organisation paid to shoot down UFO's, dissect aliens and pinch new and exciting extraterrestrial technologies.

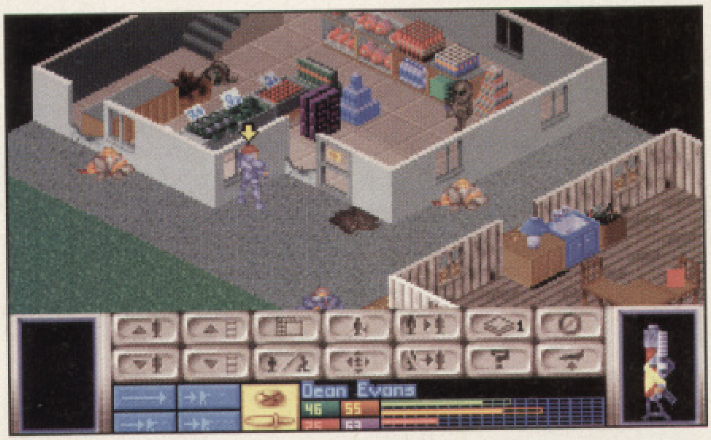
To track the alien menace you must build a number of bases around the globe and equip them with soldiers, R&D labs and aircraft. Once your radar detects a UFO you then send interceptor aircraft to, er, intercept it and attempt to shoot it down. If you succeed you can finally dispatch your Skyranger transport aircraft to the crash site where you can deploy your crack commando unit.

Down on the ground, the game switches to a 3D isometric Laser Squad-style game. The battle is conducted on a turn basis and each of your soldiers has a certain number of 'action points' which they use up by moving, turning and firing. The aim is a simple one: kill the invading aliens and stuff their technology into a huge black bag marked 'Swag'. What could be simpler?

But, as always, saving the Earth is a lengthy process. New bases must be built, weapons must be improved and finances must be shrewdly juggled. But what's the point of it all? Well, behind these seemingly random alien encounters is an evil plot of huge proportions. Do they want to carry off our women? Do they want to steal our water? Whatever the reason (and I'm not telling), you've got to beat back the aliens and follow them to their homeworld, where you will become embroiled in the ultimate battle with the corrupt intelligence behind it all.

With strategy, resource management and a 3D-shooting-the-aliens type bit, UFO is an highly playable game. The turn-based movement will not appeal to everyone, but don't let it put you off completely.





UFO: Enemy Unknown

MICROPROSE/IN-HOUSE

(0454) 326532

OUT NOW £44.99

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 10Mb of hard disk space

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Adlib and Roland sound-cards.

THE GOOD...

- Addictive strategy challenge with involving boardgame-style gameplay.

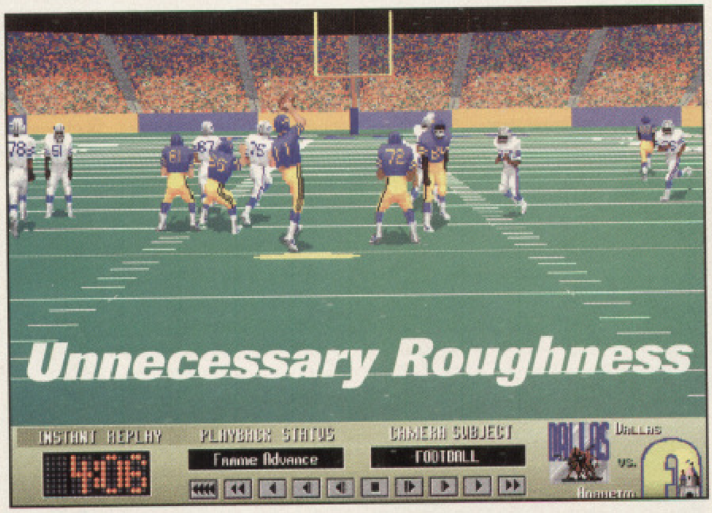
...AND THE BAD

- The combat has a tendency to become a bit boring and repetitive.

OVERALL

83%

Dean 'The Fridge' Evans catches Accolade's new football game. Touchdown!



Unnecessary Roughness

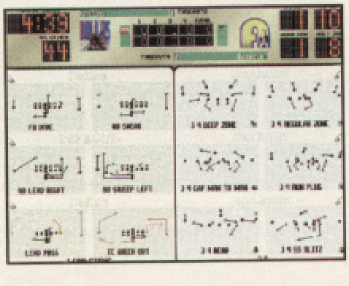
Do we need another American football game? Yes, apparently we do because Accolade have chipped in with Unnecessary Roughness, an SVGA football game that features all the current NFL teams, all the players, a league and play designer, digitised speech and frantic, multi-level arcade action.

As you would expect, Unnecessary Roughness simulates the bone-crunching, head-smashing world of NFL football. Like it's rivals, namely Sierra's Front Page Sports Pro and MicroProse's Coaches Club Football, the emphasis in UR is placed squarely on joystick-thrashing action and so the questions you should really be asking are (a) hey, I'm new to all this PC business so is this the best American Football game around? or (b) I'm already perfectly happy with those other games you mentioned so why on earth should I shell out ú40 for this?

Well, the only real reason for buying UR is to wallow in the splendour of the SVGA graphics. The players are sharply defined, so much so that you can even see the numbers on the backs of your offensive linemen. In fact, the graphics are quite superb — you'll never want to play in dreary old VGA again.

UR also features a wealth of statistical information. Every NFL player has his own digitised black and white photo and the game also features a huge amount of digitised speech. I can't fault the game cosmetically but sadly UR isn't as good as it could have been.

I've got no problem with the graphics (apart from the shabby player animation) but UR contains one unbeatable offensive play that allows you to regularly notch up massive amounts of yardage. This really spoilt it all for me because once you know what it is you're always tempted to use it. But if you can ignore this, UR is a friendly and solid game. Nice SVGA, shame the computer couldn't have been harder to beat.



UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

ACCOLADE/IN-HOUSE

(081) 877 0880

OUT NOW £39.99

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 486, VGA/SVGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 6Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Adlib and Roland sound-cards; joystick.

THE GOOD...

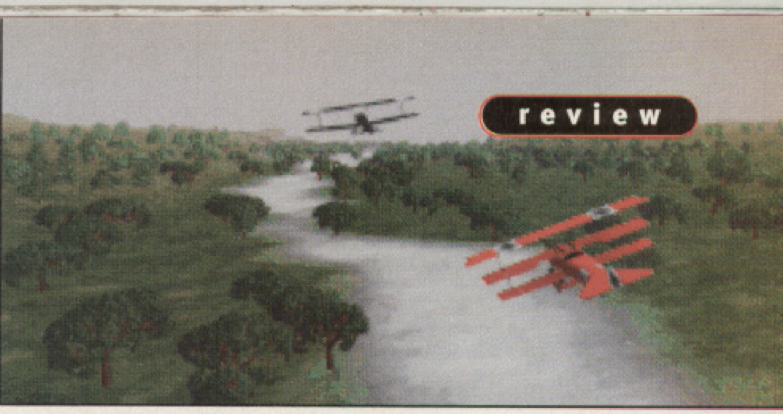
- The 256-colour SVGA graphics look absolutely stunning.

...AND THE BAD

- The gameplay is simplistic and the player animation below par.

OVERALL

79%



Evasive Action

Dean Evans proves he can crash anything as he takes to the skies with Mindscape's all-action flight sim.

Why do people play flight sims? Is it the thrill of navigating from A to B? Or maybe the adrenalin-rush of landing on an pitching aircraft carrier in a stormy sea? Nope, it's definitely the dogfighting; fighting against overwhelming odds, diving and twisting to escape hails of gunfire, looping the loop to take the enemy by surprise and finally blowing said enemy out of the sky with a well placed sidewinder. Ah, the romance of it all...

Most flight sims, however, tend to be quite complicated and you soon find that the dramatic twists and tight turns you dreamed of tend to be impossible for a small number of highly complex but completely logical technical and aeronautical reasons.

So for those of you who have little interest in being bogged down in reality, why not take a look at Evasive Action. Okay, it doesn't look the prettiest game around but it boots out stall speeds, lift ratios and other aerodynamic what-nots and takes the flight sim back to its up, down, left, right and fire fundamentals. You won't find any tedious waypoint flying or fiddly factory bombing here, just pure, undiluted dogfighting action.

The game itself is set across four very different time zones. You can take to the war-torn skies of 1914 in Sopwiths and Fokkers; zip off carriers in 1942 with Hellcats and Zeros; hit Mach 2 in 1993 with F/A-18 Hornets and Russian MiG-29s and there's even a space scenario set in 2064 with suitably futuristic and horribly beweaponed starfighters.

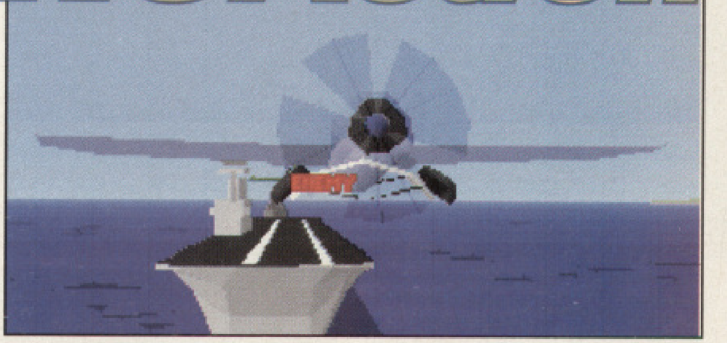
As for the actual flying, it's simplicity itself. Instead of the usual mountain of flight options, all of the controls in EA can be accessed via your joystick, mouse or keyboard, leaving you free to focus on the dogfighting. It's so simple you can take off, raise your landing gear and change between weapons with a single button click.

Apart from your opponent (handily labelled ENEMY on your HUD) each Evasive Action time zone also contains a number of 'stunts'. These involve either flying through, between or under certain obstacles (i.e. swooping below oil rigs or sliding between Zeppelins) and which, when successfully completed, repair your damage and replenish your weapons stocks. Out of ammo? Just high-tail it for the nearest bridge and fly under it.

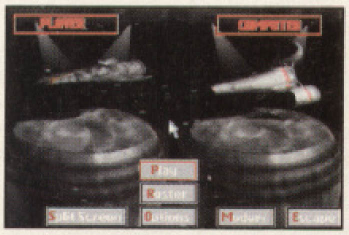
But the thing that really 'makes' Evasive Action is the versatile two-player option. Two players can either dogfight each other in split-screen mode or on two PC's connected by a null-modem cable or a modem. While the computer opponents are certainly tough enough to satisfy the lone player, there's really nothing like matching up against the unpredictability of a human opponent.

Evasive Action's great strength is its simplicity. Forget viffing, lift ratios, ILS and keyboard summary cards, this is a game for people who just want to fly around and shoot things, people who want the experience of flying without the complex keys and the 550-page instruction manual. Not everybody cares about hyper realism. Most of us, let's face it, don't even know what it is.

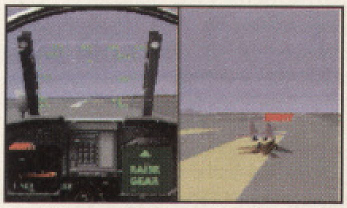
And this is where Evasive Action scores highly. While other sims make a song and dance about the accuracy of their flight models, EA dumps realism in the wastebasket and concentrates on fun and playability. In the long term it may well be limited, lacking as it does sufficient depth of gameplay to win any longevity plaudits but, with its smooth and basic polygon graphics, EA is a fast and difficult game to master and a real alternative to the current crop of heavyweight flight sims.



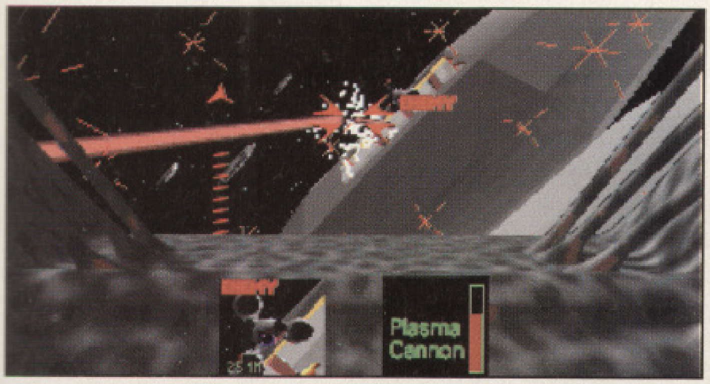
The game moves pretty damned quick, due to the basic nature of the polygon graphics which are functional rather than fancy. It's still quite pretty, though.



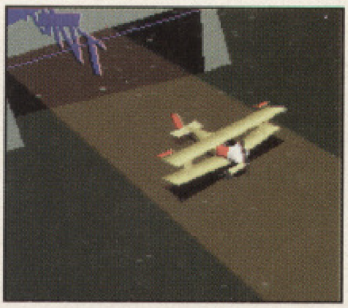
Options, options... each scenario has two different aircraft for you to fly and a multitude of game options to choose between.



Two players can fight each other in the split-screen mode with no real loss of overall game speed. This is when Evasive Action is at its best.



There's no radar to speak of — only a small camera view of your enemy with a big, fat arrow indicating which way you should turn to intercept. How much simpler could it get?



In 1914 you can barnstorm either to repair your plane or just for the sheer fun of it.

EVASIVE ACTION

MINDSCAPE/IN-HOUSE
(0444) 246333
£34.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 7Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; joystick

THE GOOD...

- A flight sim without the fun-quenching realism and the eye-boggling billion-page manual.
- The basic graphics means it moves fast even on a slower machine.
- Versatile two-player capabilities add to the fun.

...AND THE BAD

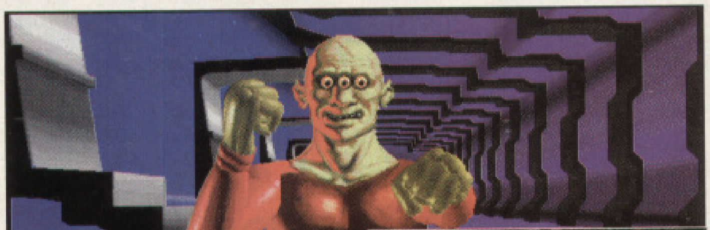
- The gameplay can get dull and repetitive.
- It's not as much fun if you play it on your own.

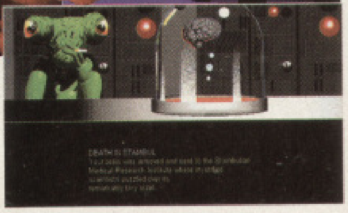
OVERALL

84%

David Upchurch searches for Terra aboard the good ship Warlock in UbiSoft's CD adventure.

Spaceship Warlock CD





As soon as Spaceship Warlock starts, you know this isn't a game that's going to take itself seriously. As the good ship Warlock wobbles gracefully (if you can wobble gracefully) across the intro screen, looking like something from a 1930's Flash Gordon serial, a bombastic tune belts out and someone who sounds like a failed Opera singer roars "Spaaace... shiiip... WARLOCK!" over and over again.

This tongue-in-cheek B-movie feel is carried through into the game itself, with all the cliches firmly in place — the heroes are suitably lantern-jawed, the heroines are suitably curvaceous and the aliens are suitably green and bug-eyed. The only thing it lacks is a mad genius scientist, but then you can't have everything.

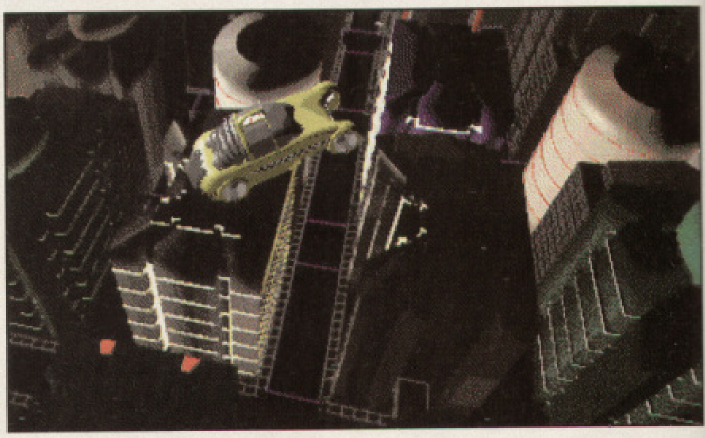
The game is set in the far and distant future, at a time long after Man's conquest of space. Unfortunately, this wild new frontier turns out to be a lot more dangerous than was first thought when Man encounters the almighty Kroll. After an all-too-brief war, the hideous aliens subjugate Man and bring him under the iron rule of the Kroll Empire.

Some humans, however, refuse to give in, humans like the notorious pirate Captain Hammer of the S.S. Warlock. With his rag-tag crew of cut-throats in tow, he terrorises the spaceways, plundering cruiseships and luxury yachts. But he has a secret agenda — to discover the location of Man's fabled home-world, Terra...

Not that all this matters to you, the player. As the game starts, you couldn't give a flying fig about the Kroll, Cap'n Hammer or Terra. In fact, you have no idea what you *do* give a flying fig about. You're given no clue in the game or the manual as to who you are, what you're aims are or what your character's motivations are (I sound like an actor!).

You're just you, essentially, and all you know is that you're penniless and stuck in Stambul City, a Z-grade city on a Z-grade planet. As you explore, however, events rapidly conspire to get you transport off-world, whereupon the adventure really begins...

(Top) Wow! Action! Spaceship Warlock's universe is a savage, violent and brutal place, so random acts of aggression are common-place. During a fight you simply click on where you want to hit or shoot your opponent. Find their weak spot and you'll win. If not, well...



(Above left) You can actually die in Spaceship Warlock, either by doing something *really* stupid or losing a fight, which is something of a rarity in adventures these days. If you do snuff it, you get treated to this shot of your brain in a jar — nice.
(Above) Anyone seen BladeRunner?

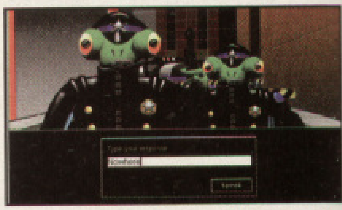
Despite this weak player motivation, Spaceship Warlock seems to be a lot of fun at first... until you realise (and it doesn't take *too* long, unfortunately) that the game has less gameplay content than a round of shove ha'penny and, even worse, lasts about as long as a pint of lager at a stag night.

Cosmetically, Spaceship Warlock hardly puts a foot wrong. The graphics are beautiful and very amusing, some of the animated cut-scenes that punctuate the action are stunning, the sound is spot-on and the control system is marvellous.

In fact, the player interface is very similar to that used in Myst or Hell Cab, which is to say that you use a simple mouse-driven interface to explore the rich, lushly-drawn locations and interact with the characters you meet.

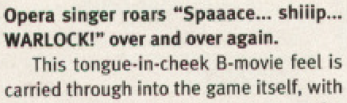
In fact, 'simple' is a bit of an understatement — the only way Reactor, the game's developers, could make this interface any easier to use is by personally sending a bloke around to your house to move the mouse for you.

So, want to move forward? Then click on the middle of the screen. Want to turn left or right? Then click on the relevant side of the screen. Want to talk to someone? Click on them. Want to fight someone? Click on them. Get the idea? Click, click, click. It's excellent — indeed, it's probably the best interface I've ever used. Let's just hope that in the future it gets used in a better game than this one...

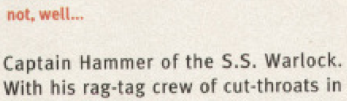


Very, *very* occasionally you get the chance to talk to someone. These chats are very limited — all you do is type in a single keyword and if the character knows anything on the subject they'll tell you something relevant. This is the sort of thing text-only games were doing over a decade ago. Sad...

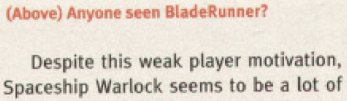
THE CAST AND CREW



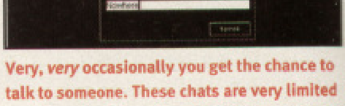
Hammer is the notorious one-eyed captain of the pirate ship Warlock. Although a bit of a hard-man, he's soft enough to let you join his crew. And he hates the Kroll, so he can't be all bad.



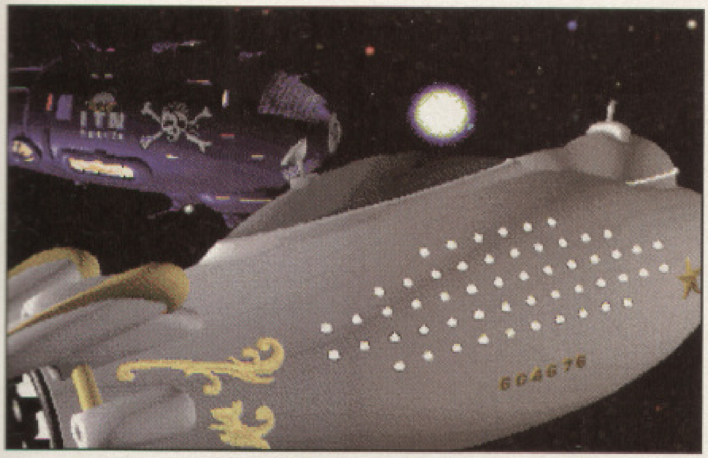
No space fantasy would be complete without a well-endowed bimbo tagging along for the ride, so here's Stella. Love the hair — looks like she's just stepped out of a salon, as the ad goes.



No, it's not Captain BirdsEye, it's Captain Starbird — you can tell because he's not surrounded by dozens of annoying little brats wolfing down fish fingers like there's no tomorrow.



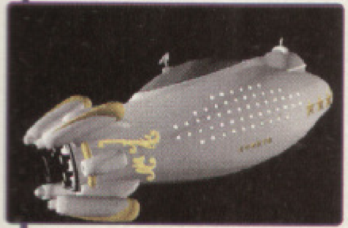
Hok Tuey! No, I'm not spitting — that's the name of this alien mugger. It's by beating up this ugly perp that you earn enough cash to buy a ticket off Stambul, the galaxy's scummiest of scumballs.



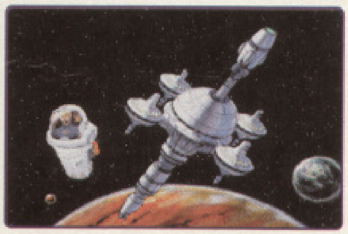
Spaceship Warlock is liberally laced with cinematic cut-scenes where you just have to sit back and watch some plot development unfold before your eyes. It's all very pretty, but it's not a *game* is it?

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Because of its tacky and frequently silly humour, Warlock often reminded me of Sierra's Space Quest V. But although SQV isn't half as friendly or sexy-looking as Warlock, as a game it's far superior. So, if you're looking for a funny, half-decent space adventure then go for Space Quest V — it may not have Warlock's graphical and aural 'Wow' factors, but at least it's got a decent challenge.



SPACESHIP WARLOCK...



...LIKE SQV WITHOUT A GAME.

...So what's my problem, then? Spaceship Warlock's got a good plot, a great interface, wonderful graphics and superb sound — what's my gripe?

Well, it's this. You see, Spaceship Warlock aspires to be an Interactive Movie (we seem to be going on about them a lot this issue). Trouble is, you could get the same level of interaction at a far cheaper price by playing a video and pausing and unpausing it every few minutes.

With Spaceship Warlock we are talking linear plotting. And I don't mean multiple-choice, the-story-branches-every-now-and-again linear plotting, I mean follow-the-story-from-beginning-to-end-and-perform-the-odd-action-every-so-often-linear plotting. This isn't a game, it's a story than you get to participate in.

Take your first steps in Stambul City, for example. Now I like to be guided through the early stages of a new game as much as anybody, but Spaceship Warlock doesn't so much guide you as stick a hook through your nose and drag you — you can't detour from the game's pre-ordained plot path even if you want to.

Later in the game, when you've got a maze to explore and you think '*At last*, now I can start doing what *I* want to do!' the game gives you a map of the labyrinth with all the major locations and important objects clearly marked to make life tediously easier for you!

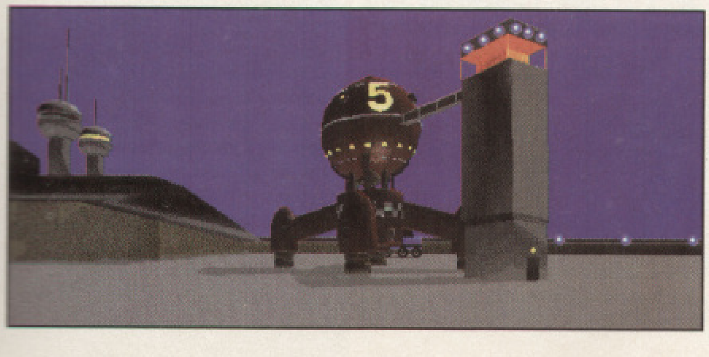
All this supposed 'user-friendliness' makes a mockery of the puzzles — if you can call them that. In the aforementioned maze, for instance, you know you've got to get to an over-heating reactor (marked on the map), but — terror of terrors — there's a blazing fire in the way. Look at the map, and you'll see a fire extinguisher marked. So what you've got to do is... Well, I think you can work that one out for yourself.

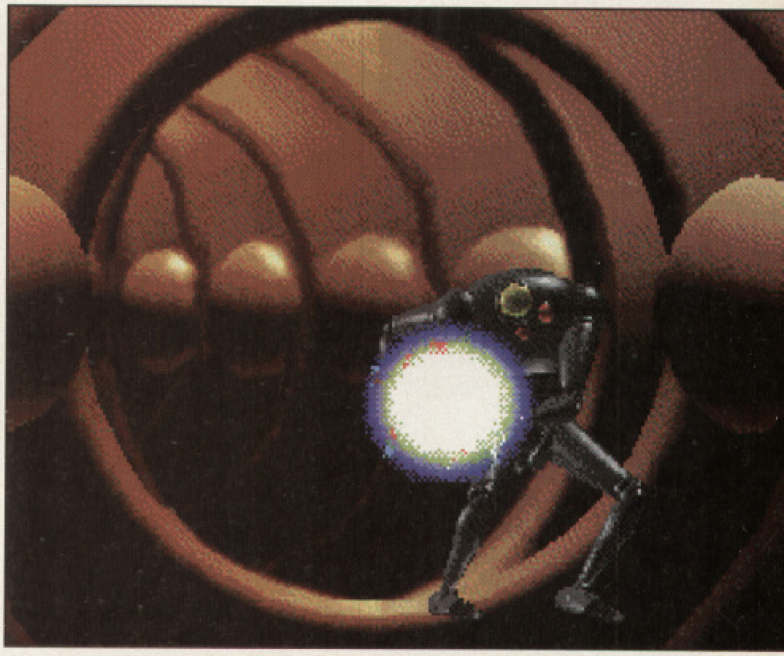
What this means is that even as an unfolding narrative Spaceship Warlock fails, because how many great stories feature lots of boring wandering around corridors? At least Dragon's Lair, Space Ace and their ilk, for all their lack of real interactivity, were *exciting* (well, so long as you hadn't actually forked out any cash for them).

The icing on this very bitter cake is the game's longevity. Well, to put it bluntly, it hasn't got any. When I first loaded it up I spent about three hours solid playing it under my own steam and thought I'd probably only barely scratched its surface — after all, this is a game on CD, you know, with massive amounts of data storage and all that.

However, I later received a solution to the game and discovered that I was well over half-way through it! All in all, you're looking at about a day's worth of 'play' here. That's not much for your forty-five quid...

I hate to be so scathing, because from an aesthetic point of view there's so much to like in Spaceship Warlock. Now if only they'd put a game in there...





(Above) Another of Warlock's more arcade-y moments occurs when you're attacked by one of the guards in the Kroll Asteroid. As the metal-suited freak leaps about, you have to target him with your ever-ready mouse pointer and zap him before he zaps you.

SPACESHIP WARLOCK CD

UbiSoft/Reactor

(081) 343 9055

£44.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive..

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Any Windows-compatible soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Colourful and vivid graphics convey the B-movie feel perfectly.
- The player interface is as intuitive as they come.

...AND THE BAD

- The game's practically over before it's even begun.
- The puzzles are simple — in fact, you can hardly call them puzzles at all.
- Way too linear — the game's more like a (barely) interactive cartoon than a game.

OVERALL

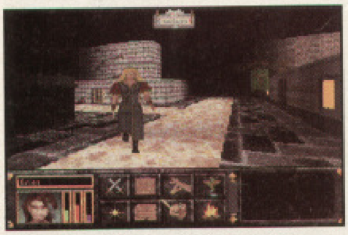
29%

Fresh from battling Vampires in RavenLoft, Alex Fraser goes underground with yet another US Gold RPG.

Elder Scrolls: ARENA

It scares me to admit it, but once I was a member of the pen and paper D&D brigade. My defence is that (a) I was young, (b) I never wore an anorak, and (c) it was that or trash cars at lunch time. It may a bit of a stigma to us 'real world' types now, but that still doesn't stop us booting up a computer RPG from time to time to inflict our own brand of genocide on the Orc populous of some new fantasy land with an unpronounceable name.

This latest entrant into the much-maligned and vastly over-crowded PC RPG market looks very familiar indeed. In fact, it seems to have borrowed rather a lot from Legends Of Valour. Not only is the graphic style very similar, it also boasts many of its features, such as the way you have to ask people for directions because the game's so damn big, or have to track down work to pay for a room for the night. Still, LOV was also by US Gold, so that's all right then. At least, I think it is.

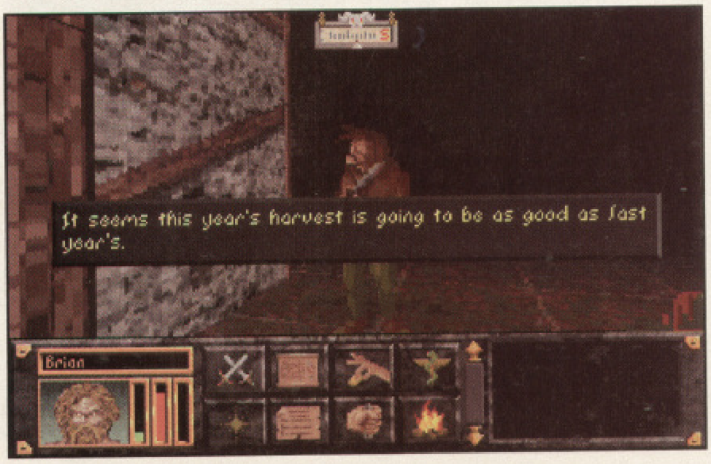


(Above) The detail level of the 3D can be adjusted to compensate for the inadequacies of your processor.

The plot can summarised succinctly thus: evil overlord, peaceful land, death, blood, darkness, only you can stop him, more death and blood. In fact, as well as puzzle solving and dishing out violent punishment to any hideous creatures you encounter, you've also got to track down seven parts of a mystical staff. Once completed the staff should, the theory goes, allow you to kill said evil overlord. It's hardly inspiring stuff, and offers nothing new outside the post-Tolkien setting, loin cloths and scantily clad gals of just about every other RPG.

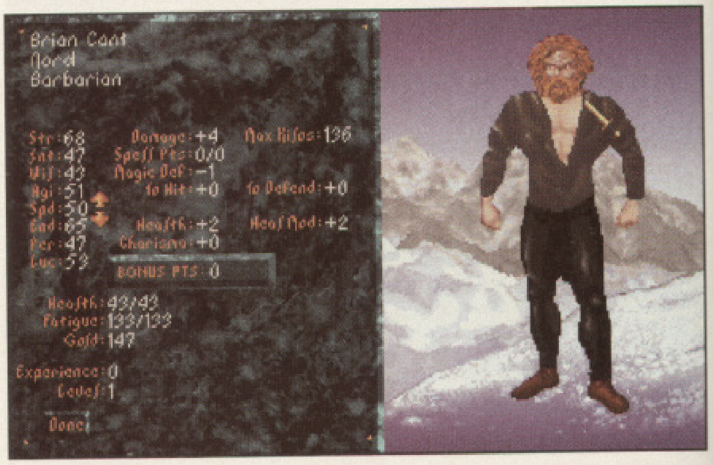
Unlike many RPGs you control one character rather than a party of adventurers. But like most RPGs, there's the usual selection of humans and elves waiting to be transformed into an adventuring rogue/warrior/magician or combination of the lot.

When you've decided your character's trade, you get to choose his (or, for that matter, her) face from a rather pathetic selection of eight, all of which are badly drawn and depressed-looking. If this kind of decision making is beyond you, there's a 'questions and answers' character generator which puts you in a series of crappy situations and, depending on how you react, chooses your character for you.



It seems this year's harvest is going to be as good as last year's.

(Below) Now that his career as a children's TV presenter is in its twilight phase, Brian Cant has swapped double-sided sticky tape and round-ended scissors for a sturdy backpack and a sharp-edged sword. I think it suits him, don't you?



Brian Cant
Nord
Barbarian

Str:68
Int:47
Wil:43
Agi:51
Spd:50
End:65
Per:47
Luc:53

Damage:+4
Spell Pts:0/0
Magic Def:-1
To Hit:+0
Health:+2
Charisma:+0

Max Kilos:136
To Defend:+0
Heal Mod:+2

BONUS PTS:0

Health:43/43
Fatigue:133/133
Gold:147

Experience:0
Level:1

Your biggest challenge is getting to grips with the size of the world you're in. To my mind it's the biggest of any RPG. It's divided into eight provinces, each containing a dozen large cities and countless dungeons complete with a multitude of evil and hungry denizens.

To begin with you don't know exactly where you are, where you should be going, what you should be doing and what your next move should be. If ignorance is bliss, then Elder Scrolls: Arena must be heaven. Actually it's not — it's just bloody frustrating.

After much pointless roaming around and experimenting with burglary, murdering the city's inhabitants and being executed by the city guard, I finally got the hang of things and was sent out on a quest to kill a troll. This ended with much shedding of blood (mine), thumping of the keyboard and a two-hour sulk. Realism is often a good thing in games, but being thrown in at the deep end in this way is almost enough to make you wish you hadn't parted with your cash in the first place.

In fact this sets the tone for much of the game. While you have your overall quest in mind, it's broken up into countless smaller missions. These have to be undertaken to find out information the locations of the staff fragments and to earn enough cash to keep you in swords and armour.

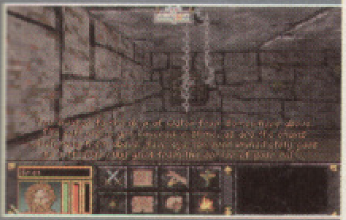
The gameplay never expands beyond that, the dungeons just get bigger and the monsters you fight tougher. This may be the engine that drives most role-playing games, but it's about time someone injected a bit of originality — especially if they're not going to come up with a novel setting or plot.

But that's not the end of the Arena story. The gameplay itself is very Doom-like, with smooth-moving graphics, a first-person perspective 3D view and lots of juicy weapons. It's this action which keeps the game playable, as you plough through legions of undead and other nastiness armed with the largest sword you can get your hands on.

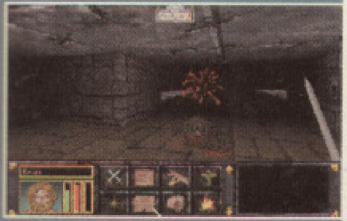
This is accompanied by fantastically gory graphics, especially when you clobber a rat with a warhammer and they explode all over the floor. As well as weapons, certain characters have magic spells at their disposal, which can be used to blast enemies with a suitably excellent graphic effect.

During the quests themselves the hardest thing is actually dealing with the

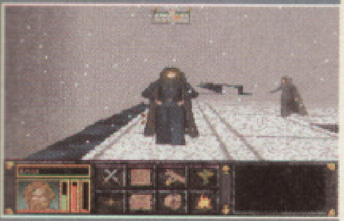
ENTER THE **ARENA!**



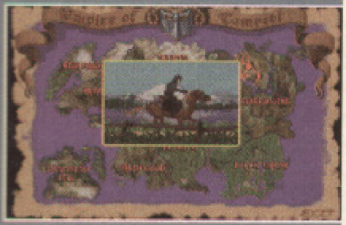
You start the game locked up in a dark and dingy dungeon. Fortunately for you the person who banged you up was obviously a few sticks short of a bundle, as they've left a spare key lying around in the cell. Grab the equipment from outside the cell then head west to find the exit.



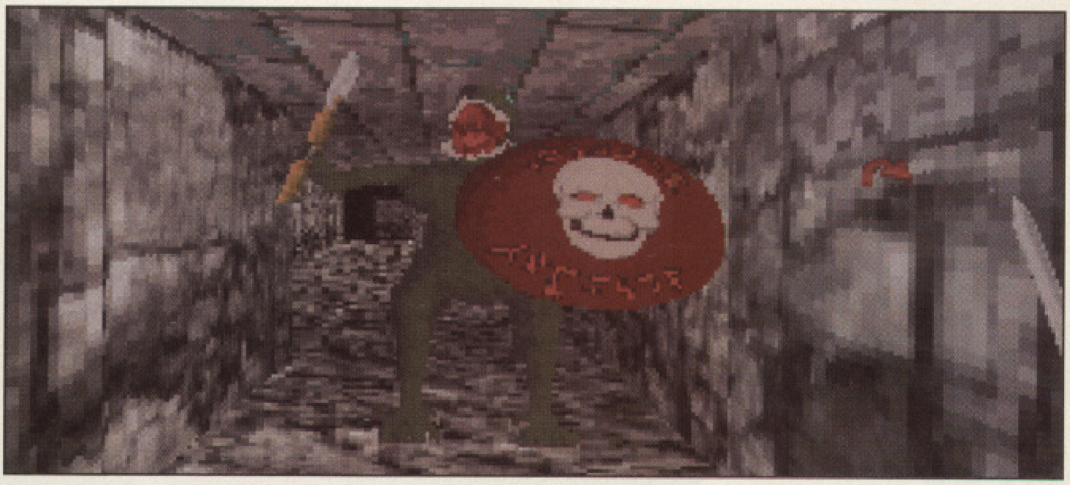
When you've escaped from the dungeon you find yourself in the big city. Chances are you're low on energy, so ask directions to the nearest inn and camp down for the night to get back to full strength. The next step is to nip into an equipment shop and tool up with some decent weapons.



Fortunately the people in this town are a friendly lot, so ask around for work. Sooner or later you'll find out that the local lord needs a bit of help. So pop along to the palace and he'll ask you to escort someone to a neighbouring city. Hey, it may not be a glamorous job but beggars can't be choosers.



The lord isn't paying much, but as nothing happens along the way you can hardly grumble — it's money for old rope and you don't have to get your sword dirty once, no matter how much you'd like to. You arrive at the city, deliver the girl and get paid. Hardly the stuff legends are made of. What next, Conan The Taxi Driver? Still, your adventures are only just beginning...



(Above) As you can see, the monsters you encounter are not always the best-drawn or scariest things you're ever likely to see in a fantasy RPG. Mind you, when a fight's going badly and you're down to a handful of hit-points, aesthetic quality is one of the last things on your mind.

monsters you face. Minimal brain power is called for other than solving a few simple riddles. It really cries out for something more which, despite me getting a third of the way through the game, never occurs.

This actually makes for quite an entertaining action game rather than something your need to kick-start your brain for. There's a plentiful supply of nasties to face as you explore the depths of dungeons, and you can hack away to your heart's content without ever having to worry about hitting a puzzle-style brick wall.

Any other grumbles? Yeah, I've got a few. While the programmers have obviously got the hang of 3D texture mapping while you're moving horizontally, one thing they couldn't quite crack was the stairs. When you're accosted by a flight it takes ages to climb them, and then the only way down is to plummet off each step — which takes even longer.

They could also have done a bit more with the character graphics. What looks like a woman wearing nothing more than a pair of loosely-connected leather straps at a distance turns into an escapee from Legoland close up.

But all these nice texturing effects, pretty as they are, exact a very high price in processing power. There's no way, even on the lowest detail level, that you'll get the game running at anything approaching a decent speed on less than a 25Mhz 486, and even that's pushing it. You'll also need 8Mb of RAM so you can run SmartDrive with the game, which reduces disk access times from a hefty two minutes to a far less frustrating 15 seconds.

But at the end of the day, I'm really not bothered about how an RPG looks, I'm only really concerned with how it plays. Which probably explains why I still like Wasteland and The Bard's Tale games. Arena does look very good, and while there isn't much variation in the tasks you have to complete, the sheer size of the game and freedom you have to wander off and generally do whatever you want before getting back to the task at hand, make it thoroughly absorbing.

I wouldn't recommend it above the deeper likes of Ultima VIII as an RPG, but there's enough slice-'n'-dice gameplay in here to keep novices through to experts hacking and slaying away for months.

ELDER SCROLLS: ARENA

US GOLD/BETHESDA

(021) 625 3388

£45.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 23Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Roland, Gravis Ultrasound and Aria soundcards.

*THE **GOOD...***

- Total freedom to create your own 'alternate life'.
- Absolutely vast gameworld to explore provides months of potential gameplay.
- Loads and loads and loads of sword-tastic action.

*...AND THE **BAD***

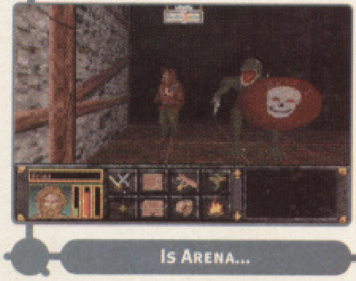
- Perhaps *too* much freedom for some — beginners may find it bewildering.
- The heavy-duty textured environments need a heavy-duty PC.

OVERALL

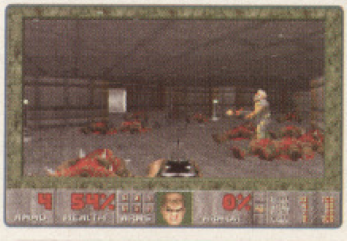
86%

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

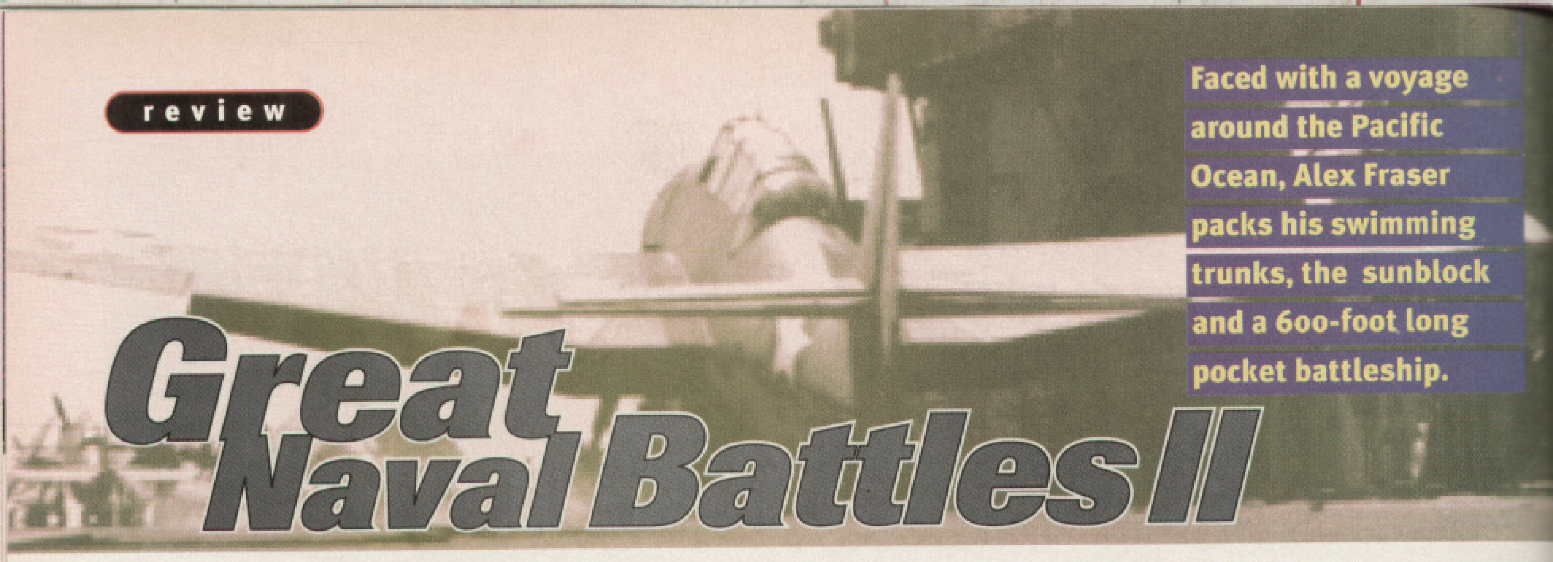
With its emphasis on fightin' 'n' fumpin' thrills, Elder Scrolls: Arena often feels like a fantasy version of Doom. While not *quite* as fast and furious as iD's classic blaster, it more than makes up for that with its greater depth as amply provided by the game's role-playing aspects.



IS ARENA...



...DOOM WITH SWORDS?



Faced with a voyage around the Pacific Ocean, Alex Fraser packs his swimming trunks, the sunblock and a 600-foot long pocket battleship.

Great Naval Battles II

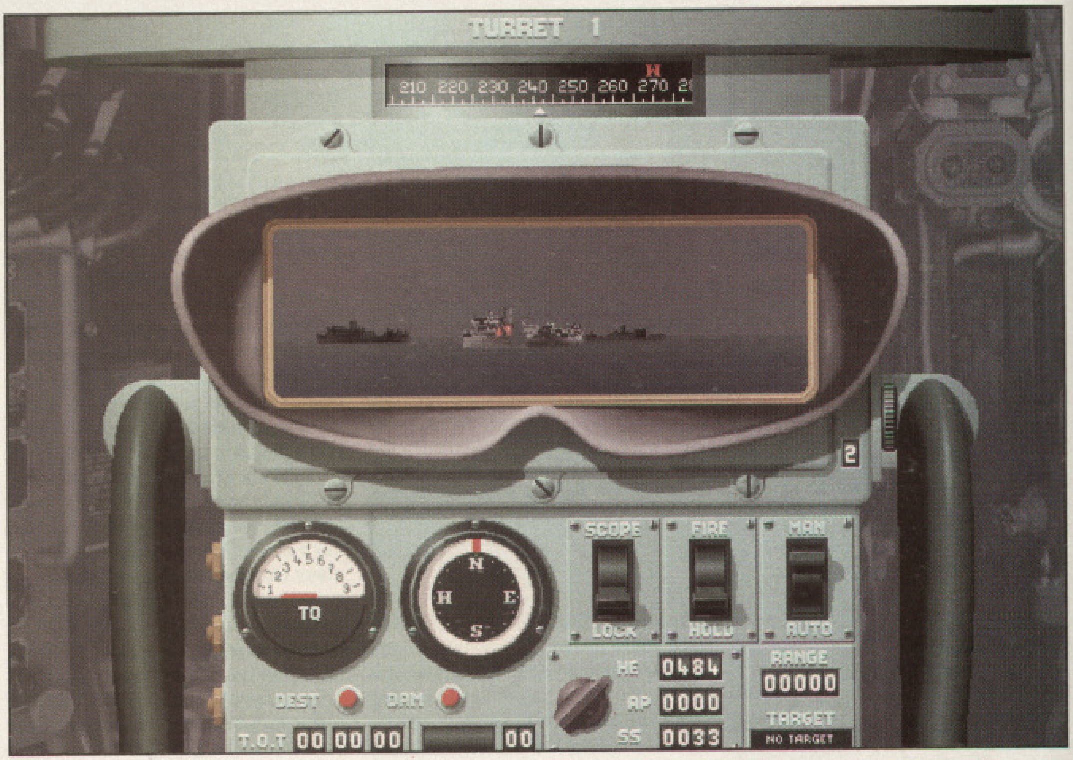
Warships from the Second World War are amazing things really. 30,000 tonnes of metal hurling 18-inch shells at each other from distances of up to ten miles. All it takes is one direct hit and you're sinking faster than... well 30,000 tonnes of scrap metal, actually.

Great Naval Battles II is all about command, about telling people what to do and when to do it. It's about being a megalomaniac, because not only do you control the stations on one ship in any given engagement, you control entire task forces — destroyers, cruisers, battleships and aircraft carriers. Send out a strike of torpedo bombers to cripple the opposition and then move those big guns in for the kill.

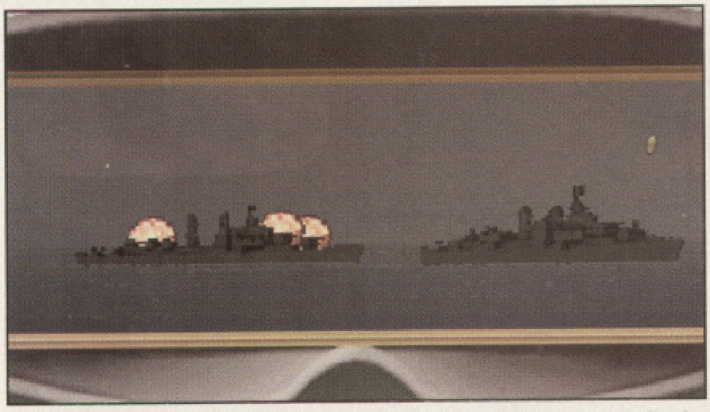
Now you might think that with all this sailing about, planning and big-gun firing to get to grips with, it would be easy to lose track of where you are and what you're doing. On the contrary, I was pleasantly surprised to find that it didn't take long to get the hang of the GNB2's point-and-click interface. In fact, several factors helped immensely.

For starters, although the manual is dauntingly thick it's informative and straight-forward. If all else fails, just flick to the relevant section and it's all laid out for you in black and white. There's also an installation booklet to browse through that includes a run-through of the three tutorial scenarios, and by the time you've been through all of them you should be pretty familiar all with the systems.

More importantly, though, the game itself is really well thought out. The SVGA graphics are stunningly clear so it's easy to see which button's where,



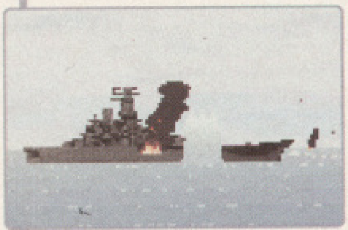
(Above) After the tiresome strategic planning and the endless hours hunched over the map plotting courses, all you really want to do is get right up into the gun turret and fire some heavy shells at enemy shipping. Of course, if you can't find any enemy shipping you can always blow your own ships up. It's not a very nice thing to do — but it's a lot of fun.



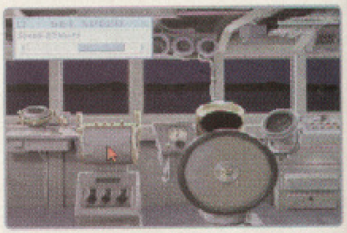
There's nothing more satisfying that seeing an enemy destroyer bite the big one in the freezing waters of the North Atlantic — or on your PC, for that matter. Come in number D-453 your time is most definitely up. Kaboom!

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Clearly Great Naval Battles 2 is closest to its predecessor Great Naval Battles but there is, however, also a striking similarity to MicroProse's superb destroyer simulation Task Force 1942. With the addition of aircraft carriers and now multiple air strikes the game presents a much greater challenge and the SVGA graphics and slightly easier gameplay give Great Naval Battles 2 the edge over any of it's rivals. That is, of course, until Task Force 1942 II comes out.

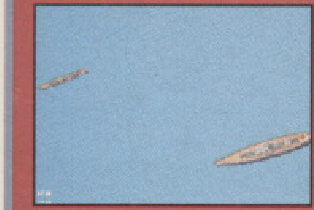


GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 2...

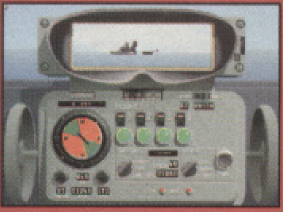


...SCUPPERS TASK FORCE 1942

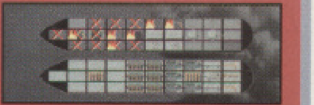
THAT SINKING FEELING



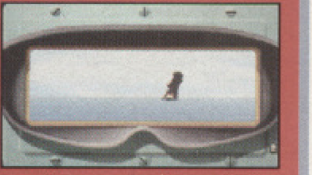
After relentless shelling the battleship Yamato lies damaged off the Solomon Islands. The Admiral decides to send in the destroyer Benham to finish her off.



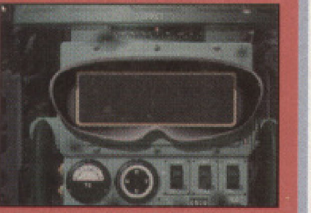
Set up for a torpedo run on the wounded ship, the Benham charges in where angels fear to put their water wings. Shells start to rain in... perhaps she's not as crippled as we thought.



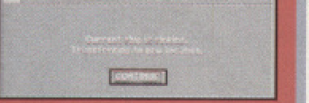
Fires on the upper deck! Get the water pumps out. The damage report shows it's only cosmetic, so the Captain keeps moving into range.



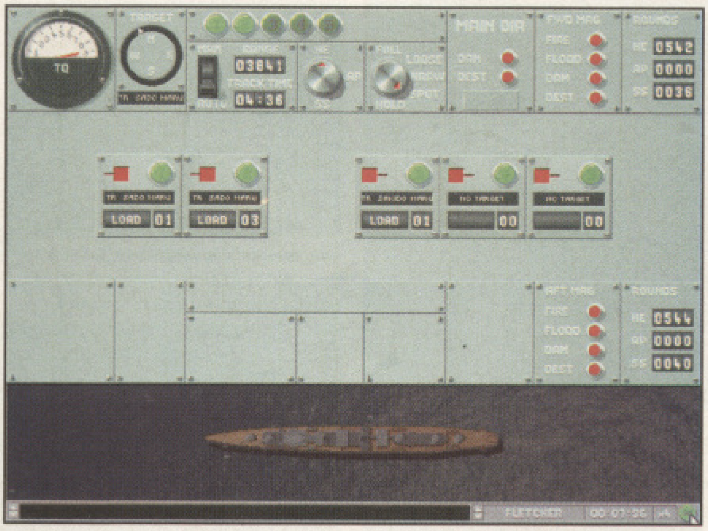
This is how the action looks from the enemy's point-of-view as the destroyer runs the gauntlet of those deadly 18-inch guns. Still advancing, though, the plucky little fellow.



Not long after and, oops, it looks like even the main guns are out of action. Run away! Run away!

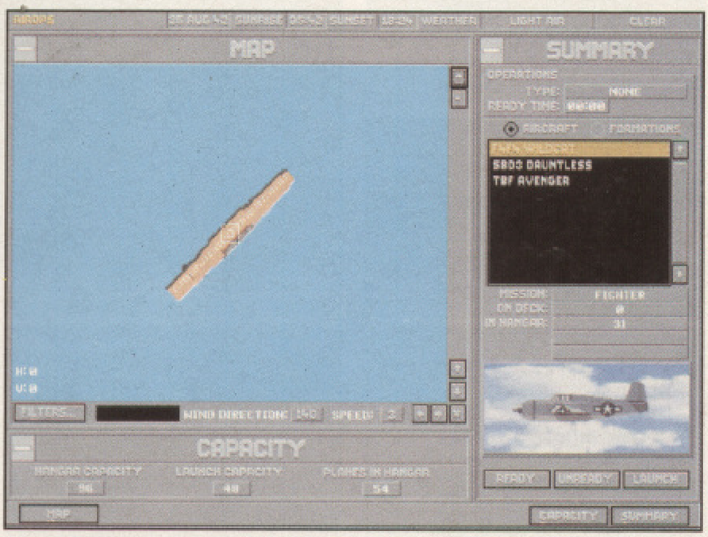

PRIORITY MESSAGE
CONTINUE

Too late, Number One. Inform the crew that we're done for. Clear the below-decks area and announce my order to abandon ship.


TQ
TARGET
RANGE
03841
TRACK TIME
04:36
MAIN DIR
DAM
DEST
FWD MAG
FIRE
FLOOD
DAM
DEST
ROUNDS
HE 0542
AP 0000
SS 0036
LOAD 01
LOAD 03
LOAD 01
NO TARGET
00
NO TARGET
00
AFT MAG
FIRE
FLOOD
DAM
DEST
ROUNDS
HE 0544
AP 0000
SS 0040
FLETCHER

(Above) Firing the guns isn't just a question of holding down the Fire key. No sir, there's buttons to push and dials to twiddle too.

(Below) My Little Aircraft Carrier — one of the nicer features of GNB2 is the way you can zoom right down onto the individual ships.


AIROPS
SUNRISE
SUNSET
WEATHER
LIGHT AIR
CLEAR
MAP
SUMMARY
OPERATIONS
TYPE: NONE
READY TIME:
AIRCRAFT
FORMATIONS
SBD3 DAUNTLESS
TBF AVENGER
MISSION: FIGHTER
ON DECK:
IN HANGAR: 31
FILTERS...
WIND DIRECTION:
SPEED:
CAPACITY
HANGAR CAPACITY
LAUNCH CAPACITY
PLANES IN HANGAR
54
READY
UNREADY
LAUNCH
MAP
CAPACITY
SUMMARY

and you can pause the action any time things start to get out of hand — and you can still flip around the various ships and screens. In fact, it's an absolute joy to play.

But even *more* important than all this, GNB2 is a game you can enjoy playing, no matter who you are. There's complex strategy for the strategist and dramatic gun pounding for the action fans, and the game doesn't suffer for it.

As an example of what the PC can do without a top of the range 486 processor, GNB2 is one stonker of a product. The SVGA graphics are as good as anything I've seen, the sound is atmospheric and the gameplay is tailored in such a way that both newcomers and GNB veterans will get plenty of challenging play for their dosh. There are also plenty of one-off scenarios for extended interest.

But (and I've waxed lyrical for six paragraphs now, so there had to be a 'but' in here somewhere) there are a couple of niggles in amongst all the plaudits. The graphics, particularly the backdrops, *are* excellent by anybody's standards and IO Design have added atmosphere by including actual war-time photos, but the quality of the moving graphics is far more standard.

By which I mean that the 3D views from the gun stations, bridge, and crow's nest look wonderful until you start using the binoculars to zoom in (which you'll do a lot if you want to hit anything), at which point they get fairly blocky and on occasion downright ugly.

Worse, there's only one campaign. For all the challenging one-off scenarios, the only time you get to put all your skills together into a decent top-notch saga is at Guadalcanal. This probably means extra add-on campaign disks are in development now to sap your money supply and, okay, they'll probably be excellent and thoroughly worthwhile, but even two alternative campaigns would have been better in the meantime.

Now that I've got that out of the way, there isn't a heck of a lot else I can complain about to be honest. GNB2 grabbed me by the gun turrets and had me enthralled from the moment I loaded it up. It's polished beyond belief, slicker than an eel in a tub of Vaseline and the game never loses its appeal even after hours and hours of naval barrage.

Not so long ago I was convinced that there was nothing like MicroProse's Task Force 1942 to get across the authentic feel of ships at war, but blow me down if Great Naval Battles II hasn't come along and made me do a double-take. It's inspirational stuff, with plenty of ordering destroyers, lining up of guns, and steaming into battles guns-a-blazing.

In fact, it's big thumbs up all round thanks to GNB2's easy-to-use controls and excellent quality of graphics. There's plenty of challenge in the missions, and with aircraft carriers now involved you get the added dimension of air strikes, air searches and CAP's to mess with.

Carriers seem to be quite popular at the moment, with EA's Carriers At War II out now and MicroProse's Pacific Air War 1942 due soon, but by using them as one element of the whole battle GNB2 manages to get big-gun battleships and dive-bombing to work together.

It's all frantic stuff and if you've visited H.M.S. Belfast and fancied being an armchair Admiral, you won't get a much better chance than this.

GREAT NAVAL BATTLES II

US Gold/SSI

(021) 625 3388

£39.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 386, SVGA, 640K, 4MB of RAM and 12Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards.

THE **GOOD...**

- Plenty of tough, ship-threatening decisions for the amateur strategist...
- ...And plenty of gunfire and torpedo runs for the non-strategist.
- The SVGA graphics and the stereo sound are superb.

...AND THE **BAD**

- At max. zoom the graphics start getting blocky and occasionally ugly.
- There's only one campaign — I feel an expensive add-on disk is just waiting round the corner.

OVERALL

89%

Bloodnet CD

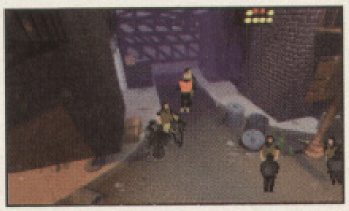
RPG, graphic adventure or somewhere in between? Dean Evans goes batty in the dingy world of MicroProse's BloodNet.

It seems that the future is going to be a bleak one. There'll be no babbling brooks, no idyllic hippie communes and not a Browning poetry recital for miles. Take 2094, for example, a world where society and order has collapsed and mankind has tumbled into a hell of violence, street gangs, computer hackers and drug abuse.

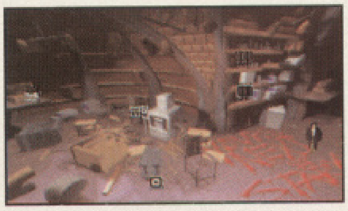
In the midst of this urban nightmare wanders Ransom Stark, a one-time computer hacker now suffering a brain disease brought on by too much time in Virtual Reality (you have been warned, kids). With the aid of a brain implant Stark is able to live a normal life but things change dramatically when he meets Abraham Van Helsing, an undead vampire lord.

Now, you don't really expect to find an undead vampire lord in central Manhattan (drugs, pimps, yellow cabs driven by aliens maybe but vampires, no) and Stark is tricked and attacked by Van Helsing. Saved from vampirism by his brain implant, Stark escapes death and, like Dennis Quaid in the film DOA, staggers out into New York to try to save his life. It's then up to you, dear reader, to guide Stark across the city in search of a cure for the evil disease.

Although BloodNet looks very much like a graphic adventure it plays more like a traditional role-playing game. As such Stark's character and performance are both stat-based and like any good RPG you must recruit a motley band of adventurers to aid you in your quest. Character interaction also forms a large part of the game and much of your progress will come from chatting (in full digitised speech, of course) to the right people rather than packing huge weapons and beating hackers and street gangs to a bloody pulp.

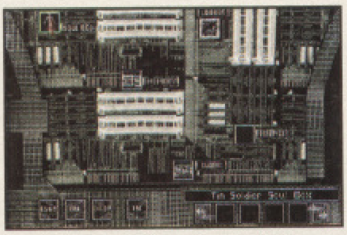


Combat is turn-based and you can either take a full part, issuing orders, choosing weapons, etc, or let the computer do it for you.

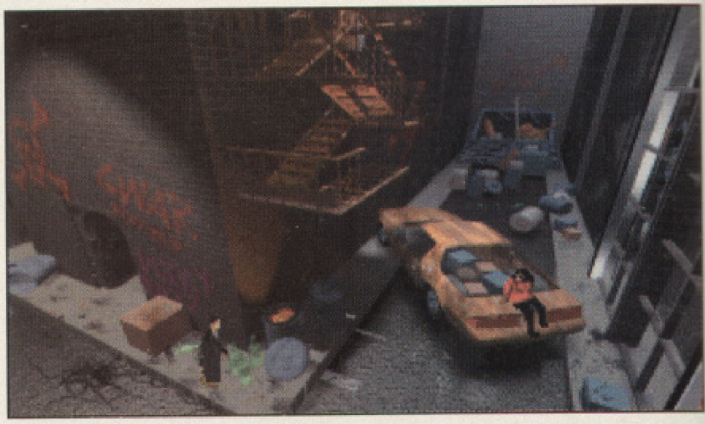


The control interface is a fiddly point-'n'-click affair with most actions accessed via a pull-down toolbar.

At the start of the game you can only visit a limited number of locations but as you begin to piece together the complex plot (and — boy! — is it complex), new ones appear. Your quest won't just take you around Manhattan either, Stark can also access or 'jack into' Cyberspace, a computerised world of Virtual Reality and information banks. Oh, and there's the usual puzzles, subplots and red herrings too.



Your 'cyberdeck' is the gateway to Cyberspace. As the game progresses you can add custom chips to your deck to improve it.

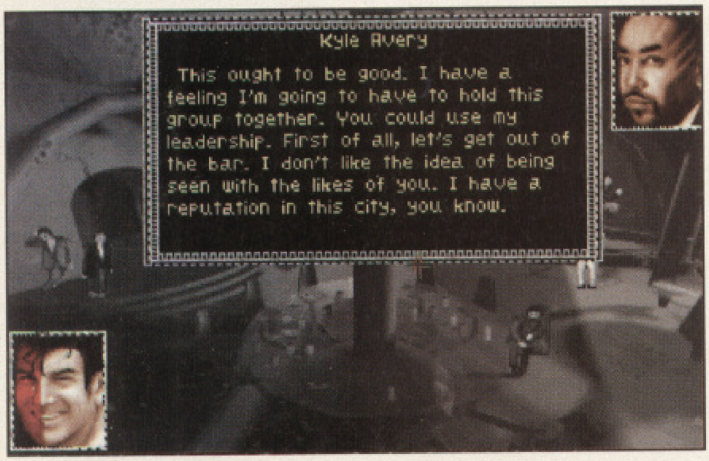


Manhattan is chock full of arms and drug dealers who sell their wares from the trunks of their cars.

Unfortunately the mouse-driven interface is quite fiddly and far from intuitive, but if you actually sit down and read the manual you shouldn't have any long-term problems. If you're a Cyberpunk fan you shouldn't have any trouble with the language either, but if you're not familiar with ICE, nanotechnology, data streams and brain jacking, you may well find it all a bit confusing.

BloodNet is a difficult game to describe and it's not the sort of game you can just dip into. You've got to learn how your Cyberspace 'deck' works, experiment with designer drugs and even test-fire weapons. It's far too complex for casual play but persevere and you'll soon be thoroughly absorbed.

With its dark, oppressive mood, combat, puzzles and Cyberspace sequences, BloodNet is a huge challenge. However, it must be said that this game isn't going to appeal to everyone. It's more of an RPG detective game than a graphic adventure, and at times it's so weird and complex it's difficult to understand what the hell is going on. But all this aside, if you fancy something a bit different and you don't mind a bit of gratuitous killing and bad taste (and who doesn't?) then pop out and buy BloodNet. It's quite superb.



Kyle Avery

This ought to be good. I have a feeling I'm going to have to hold this group together. You could use my leadership. First of all, let's get out of the bar. I don't like the idea of being seen with the likes of you. I have a reputation in this city, you know.

While killing street punks may be fun, talking is often the better course of action. On CD of course, BloodNet has over 6,000 lines of recorded dialogue.

BLOODNET CD

MicroProse

(0454) 326532

£44.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33 MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Involving, very atmospheric, highly original and a massive challenge.
- A refreshing approach to the old role-playing genre; not an Orc or a Goblin in sight.
- It's not a game for the faint-hearted.

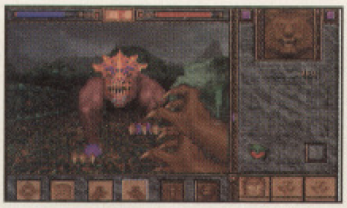
...AND THE BAD

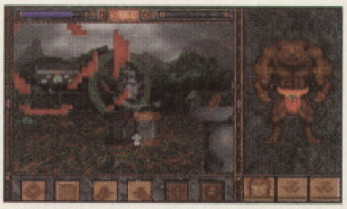
- The complicated RPG/adventure mix may put some players off.
- The control interface is quite fiddly and the heavy Cyberpunk theme is often very confusing.

OVERALL

86%

"All change!" David Upchurch reviews Origin's shape-shifting CD odyssey.





ShadowCaster CD

Things, so it is said, are not always as they seem. While chatting to his grandfather in the park one day, young Kirt is shocked when the old man reveals that our handsome hunk is, in fact, a shapechanger, a being capable of assuming the form and abilities of other creatures at will.

As grandfather rambles on, Kirt learns that his kind are refugees from their own world, hiding from the demonic Veste who systematically wiped out most of his race many years earlier. Before Kirt can say "Er, I think it's time for your medication, pops" he's magically transported back to his homeworld and charged with the task of destroying Veste once and for all...

ShadowCaster is an RPG seemingly aimed at people who don't like RPGs.

Free of reams of stats, cliched fantasy characters and magic systems you need a PhD to comprehend, ShadowCaster plays very much like Doom with spells. There are endless beautifully-drawn 3D labyrinths to run around and lots and lots of bizarro monsters to fight, along with the odd simplistic 'Take Object A to Location B'-style puzzle thrown in to keep the brain ticking over.

But while Origin are to be applauded for attempting to widen the appeal of RPGs by stripping away the complicated baggage associated with them, they perhaps pruned a little too heavily here. While enjoyable at first, most will find that boredom eventually sets in because of the game's lack of depth.

For the less demanding, however, there's plenty to enjoy here. After all, ShadowCaster is nothing if not an audio-visual treat, especially in this CD version which boasts loads of beautiful animations accompanied by digitised speech. Those who like games with a bit of meat on their bones, however, should look elsewhere.

SHADOWCASTER CD

ORIGIN/RAVEN

(0753) 549442

£TBA OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- About as exciting as an RPG can get...

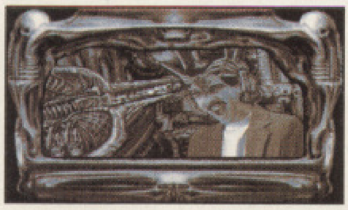
...AND THE BAD

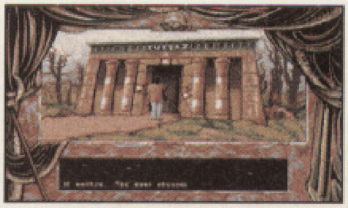
- ...But lacks sufficient depth to keep purists happy.

OVERALL

71%

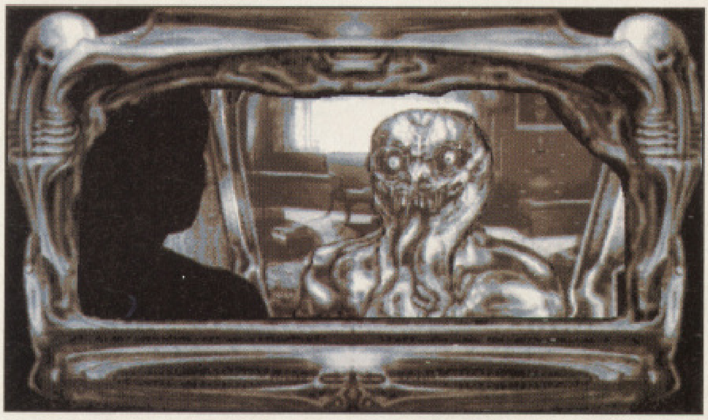
David Upchurch re-enters Cyberdreams' dark fantasy world.





Dark Seed CD

Buying a house is a nerve-wracking experience at the best of times. However, in the case of new home-owner Mike Dawson it's not fluctuating interest rates that are making his head sore, but vivid nightmares of aliens implanting hideous embryos inside his brain. As Mike attempts to cure his headache he eventually uncovers a plot by grotesque aliens to take over 'our' world. Can he stop them before his head literally explodes?



As far as graphic adventures go, Dark Seed appears to have all the ingredients of a classic. The player interface is as good as anything LucasArts or Sierra have come up with, the scenario is certainly different and the often gruesome graphics are wonderful.

However, play reveals several major flaws. For a start, some of the objects you need are *really* tiny and are frequently indistinguishable from the detailed backgrounds; there's a pin on the floor in the library, for example, that's literally no more than a couple of pixels big and almost impossible to spot unless you've already been tipped off that it's there from, say, a hint book or some other source.

Worse than that, though, is the fact that key plot events occur at certain times and in certain locations during each game 'day'. If you're not in the right place at the right time to see or act on them then it's impossible to solve the game. Since you typically only discover that these events are happening by pure chance, you'll have to replay the game many times before you finally solve it.

The speech in this CD version wins no prizes either, with Mike commenting on even the most bizarre happenings in a jovial "Gee whizz gosh!" kind of way, while the supporting characters have a variety of equally stupid accents.

There's a lot that's good here. Let's hope that Cyberdreams' get it right with Dark Seed 2...

DARK SEED CD

CYBERDREAMS/IN-HOUSE

(071) 328 3267

£TBA OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards; joystick.

THE GOOD...

- Has all the makings of a classic...

...AND THE BAD

- ...But falls down because of some incredibly sloppy and ill-conceived game design.

OVERALL

46%

Reunion

Alex Fraser packs some extra sandwiches and heads off into the unknown galaxy with Grandslam.

(Above) Here I am (showing my feminine side) with my happy band of advisors gathered around the command centre. From here you can direct your attention pretty much anywhere; have a look at your fleet, your colonies, your inventions, or even pop down to the local pub where gossip can be overheard — for a price of course.

The late 26th Century saw man reaching for the stars as he'd never done before. Huge colony ships, with some 1500 crew aboard, were sent into the furthest reaches of the galaxy to search for planets to colonise.

After years of fruitless exploration, one ship found a likely candidate and headed out to claim it in the name of humanity. Unfortunately, a collision with an uncharted asteroid field severely damaged the ship's warp generators, and the crew were forced to evacuate the crippled ship and make planetfall inside fragile escape pods. Most didn't make it. Those that did were faced with the awesome task of building a new colony — New Earth.

Well, that's all history now. The date is 2927 and New Earth is a thriving community; self-sufficient, stable and free from conflict and disease. Having achieved a technical level to rival that of its ancestors, the people of New Earth have (not surprisingly) decided that it's time make contact with their parent planet once again. And as the President, it's you job to lead this glorious expedition to Earth.

You start the game as a lonely man (or woman — equal rights, guys) charged with the task of creating not only a technically advanced exploration force, but one able to defend itself against anything thrown its way. To help you do this you need to employ the help of a number of advisors, each an expert in their own field.

By entering a sort of futuristic version of a 'job centre' you can check the credentials of possible employees, each specialising in either construction, development, fighting and space fleet control. The better their skills, the more they'll cost to employ, and as you start out with severely limited funds you'll have to make do with what you can afford and 'upgrade' later.

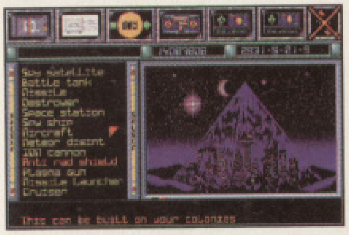
Once that's out of the way you can concentrate on the multiple tasks of keeping your people fed, watered and generally happy, while simultaneously diverting sufficient funds into the research and development of new technologies and the exploration of new worlds to colonise.

Of course, eventually you'll meet aliens who aren't keen on your empire-building shenanigans, so combat is inevitable. Building up your spacefleets with the latest craft and super-duper weaponry takes a while, but it's well worth all the bother — as you'll discover when you get to sit back and watch the exciting and gorgeously animated combat sequences.

You've probably guessed that Reunion is — and this is a severely inadequate summary — a clever mixture of strategy and resource management, with a Sim City-like element thrown in for good measure. Imagine trying to juggle fifteen balls in the air and you'll begin to get an idea of just how complex Reunion can get in its latter stages.

Fortunately, all the complications lie in the decision making, not in the actual playing of the game. The icon interface is friendly and well thought-out, affording the player a number of different ways to progress through the game, so it's practically a different game every time you play it.

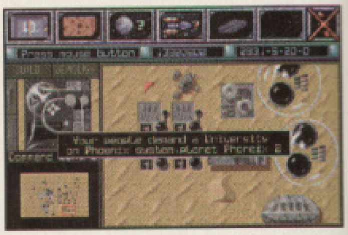
Atmosphere is a high scoring part of Reunion — it's got bulging bags of it — and though it initially seems a bit slow, once you have some decent fleets on the go (not to mention tons of high-tech toys in development) you'll never get bored. Anyone with an interest in space exploration games calling for loads of good old-fashioned forward planning will get well into this, and have a damn good time while they're there.



Spy satellite
Battle tank
Missile
Destroyer
Space station
Spy ship
Aircraft
Meteor dscent
ION cannon
Anti rad shield
Plasma gun
Missile launcher
Cruiser

This can be built on your colonies

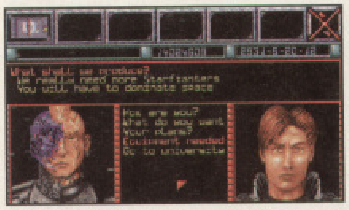
As the game progresses, your developers will come up with more and more new inventions which can then be put into production. This is a sort of Sainsburys of the future, so get your wallet out.



Press mouse button

Your people demand a University on Phoenix system planet Phoenix 8

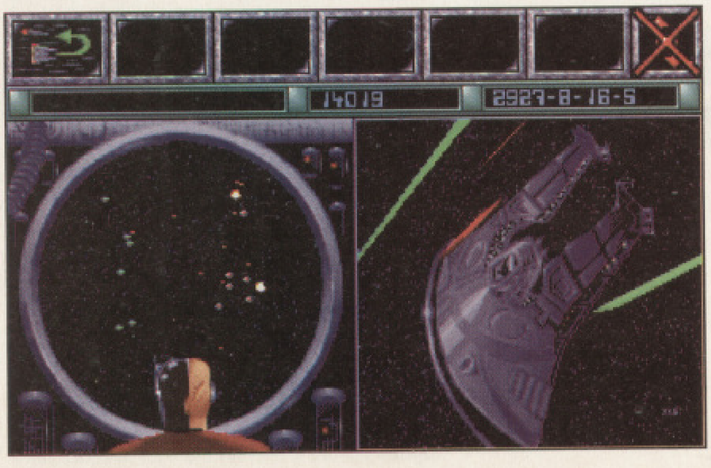
A major key to success comes in the form of successful planet colonisation. Though you start out with only your homeworld, other planets are gradually added to your roster as you spread out across the galaxy.



What shall we produce?
We really need more Starfighters
You will have to dominate space

Who are you?
What do you want
Your plans?
Equipment needed
Go to university

You can communicate with any of your advisors at the touch of a button. Though the conversations are fairly limited, they're generally flexible enough to find out what people are up to and what they require to do their jobs.



(Below) When you encounter a hostile alien race the fleet can be sent to protect your precious worlds. Here, fighting ships are shown as radar blips, accompanied by some superb animations. It's all very pretty and a nice counter-point to those 'quieter' moments.

REUNION

GRANDSLAM/AMNESTY

(081) 680 7044

£TBA OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 23Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster and Gravis Pro soundcards.

THE GOOD...

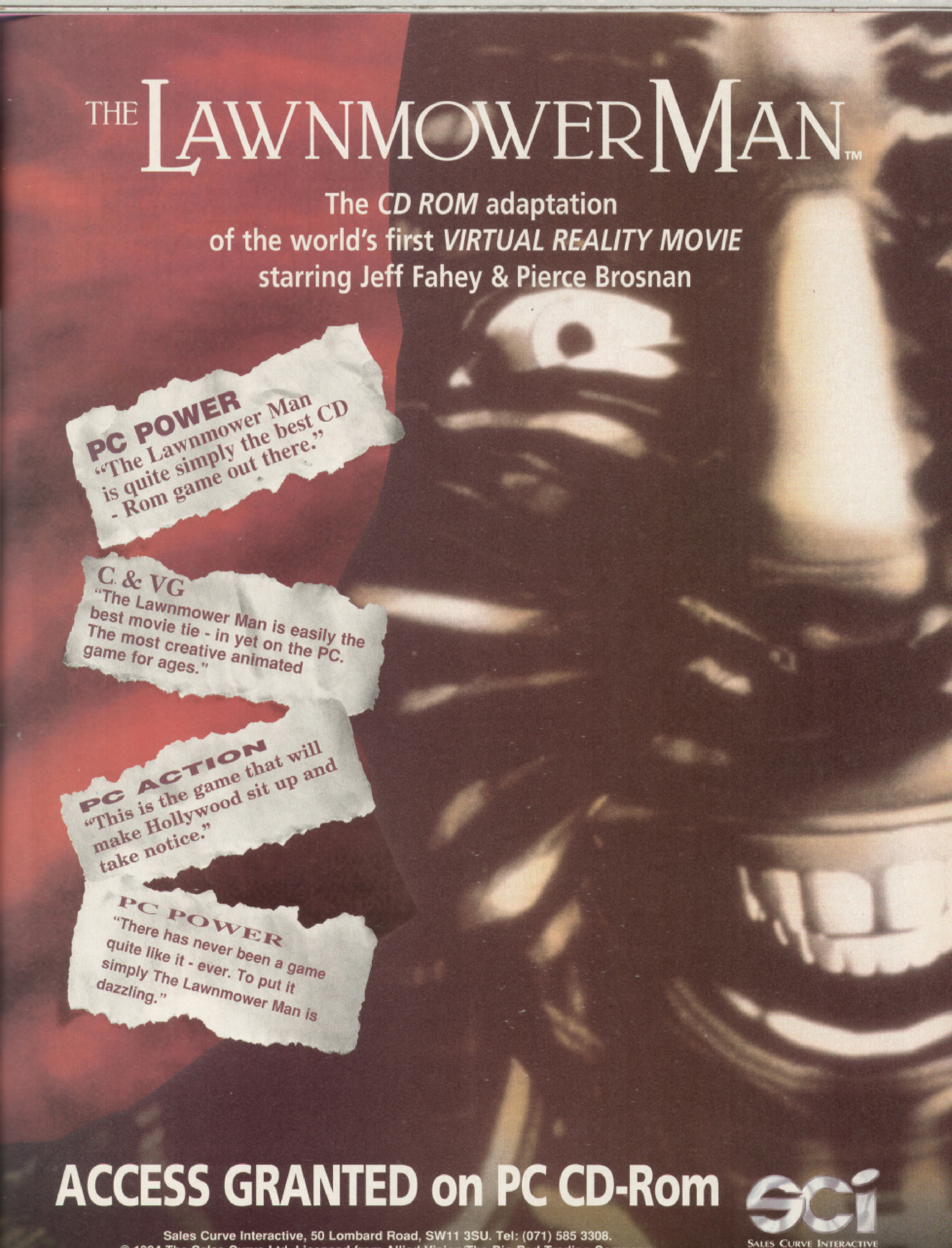
- Very atmospheric with lots to see and *plenty* to do.
- Tons of wicked toys to play with — at least, there are once you've developed them!
- Good use of still and animated sequences to keep things moving along.

...AND THE BAD

- Sometimes slow — definitely takes a while to get into.
- Though great fun, it's probably not everyone's cup of tea.

OVERALL

82%



THE LAWNMOWER MAN™

The *CD ROM* adaptation
of the world's first *VIRTUAL REALITY MOVIE*
starring Jeff Fahey & Pierce Brosnan

PC POWER
"The Lawnmower Man is quite simply the best CD - Rom game out there."

C. & VG
"The Lawnmower Man is easily the best movie tie - in yet on the PC. The most creative animated game for ages."

PC ACTION
"This is the game that will make Hollywood sit up and take notice."

PC POWER
"There has never been a game quite like it - ever. To put it simply The Lawnmower Man is dazzling."

ACCESS GRANTED on PC CD-Rom

SCi
SALES CURVE INTERACTIVE

Sales Curve Interactive, 50 Lombard Road, SW11 3SU. Tel: (071) 585 3308.
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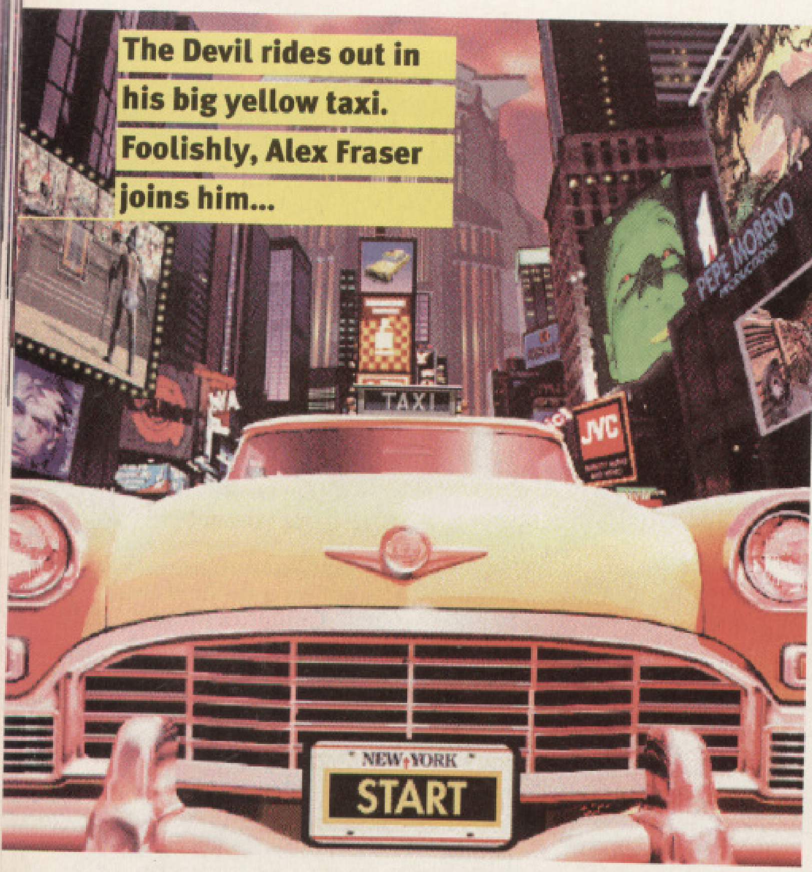
Hell Cab

The Devil rides out in his big yellow taxi. Foolishly, Alex Fraser joins him...



A horrible sense of déjà vu overwhelmed me with Hell Cab. One of the most nerve-wracking cab rides I ever took was from JFK airport into New York. The driver had a screaming row with another driver as we hurtled into the city. Terrifying.

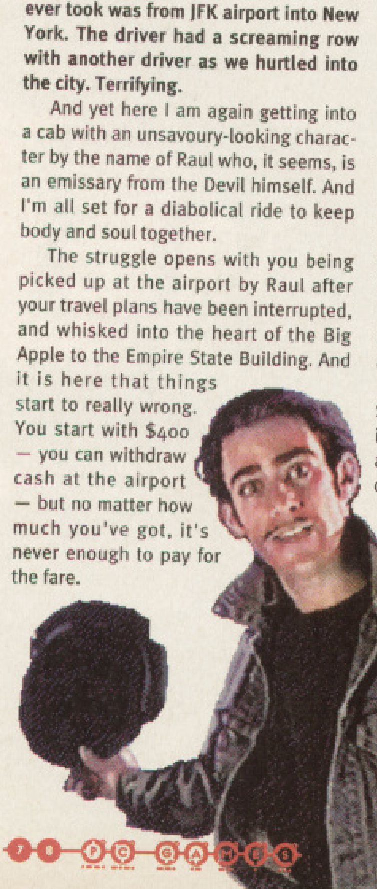
And yet here I am again getting into a cab with an unsavoury-looking character by the name of Raul who, it seems, is an emissary from the Devil himself. And I'm all set for a diabolical ride to keep body and soul together.

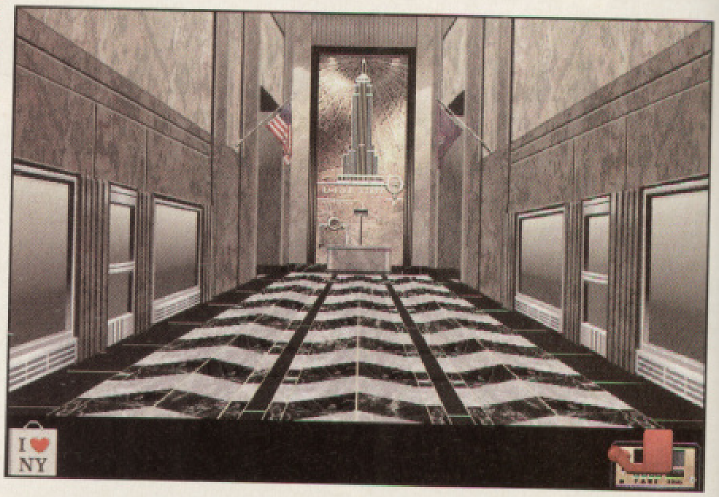
The struggle opens with you being picked up at the airport by Raul after your travel plans have been interrupted, and whisked into the heart of the Big Apple to the Empire State Building. And it is here that things start to really wrong. You start with $400 — you can withdraw cash at the airport — but no matter how much you've got, it's never enough to pay for the fare.

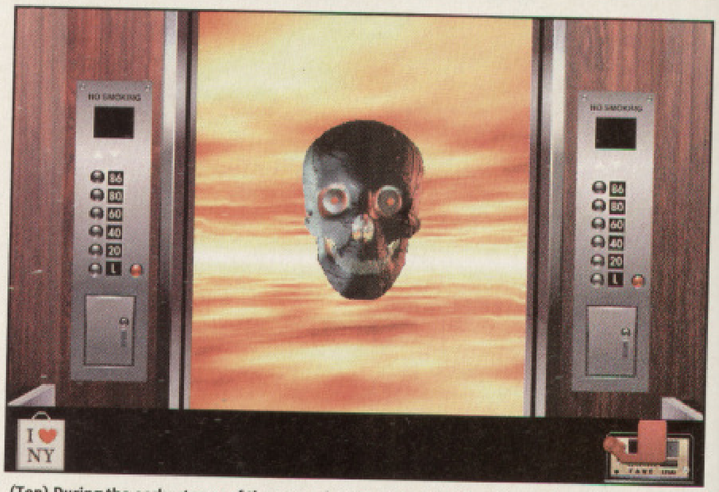
But hey, Raul is in a good mood. Sign a piece of paper and he'll let you off the money. It's a bargain — but a bargain with a difference. It turns out to be a contract to take the ultimate sightseeing tour through time and history, from present day New York to ancient Rome, through to the World War One trenches of Verdun and into the prehistoric nightmare of a Jurassic jungle. Central to the entire adventure is the Empire State Building. At the top are heavenly views but deep, deep down in the basement is the gateway to Hell.

When you sign Raul's tour agreement you are asked to fill in a questionnaire. Your answers will alter the level of your soul. If your answers portray you as an uncaring, selfish, no-good piece of low-life, then it's straight off to Hell to roast on the devil's spit for eternity. Or at least until you play the game again.

Performance is measured on the Soul-O-Meter. The level of life and soul is reflected in your questionnaire answers and in the amount of fare you owe Raul. Effectively this gives you three lives. Lose one and you find yourself back in the Empire State Building's lift, plummeting down to Hell's waiting room where the horned-one sneers, jeers and snarls before sending you back into the adventure for one more try at staying alive.





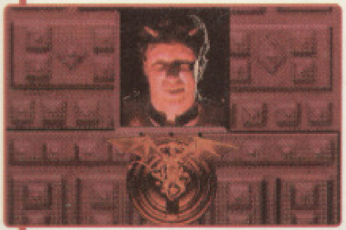


(Top) During the early stages of the game there's a lot of really rather dull wandering around the innards of the Empire State Building. A few scatter cushions thrown here and there would brighten this drably grey place up no end.

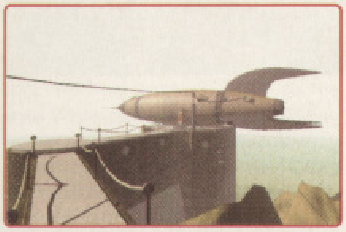
(Above) Welcome to Hell, sinner! The Empire State Building's lift doesn't just go up, it also goes down — deep, deep down, straight to the lair of Beelzebub. This is where you'll end up if you make a few too many bad decisions.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

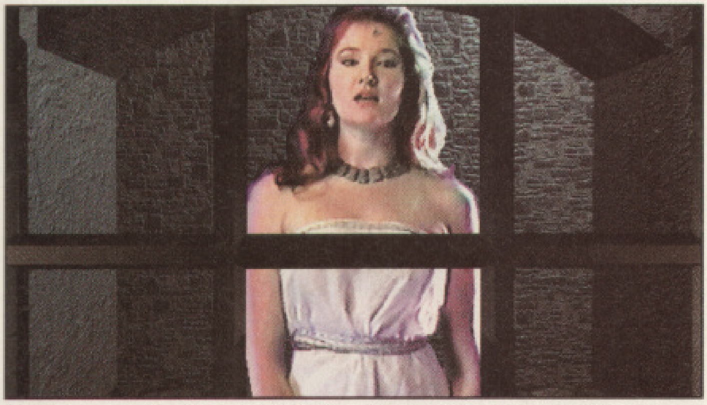
Hell Cab is very much a traditional point-'n'-click adventure, similar in style to Myst (reviewed this issue), with highly-detailed sumptuous SVGA graphics, an engrossing plot and occasional moments of extreme tedium as you wait for the game to catch up with your puzzle-solving ambitions. Where they differ in a big way is in atmosphere, with Myst lacking the dark and violent edge of the cab from Hell.



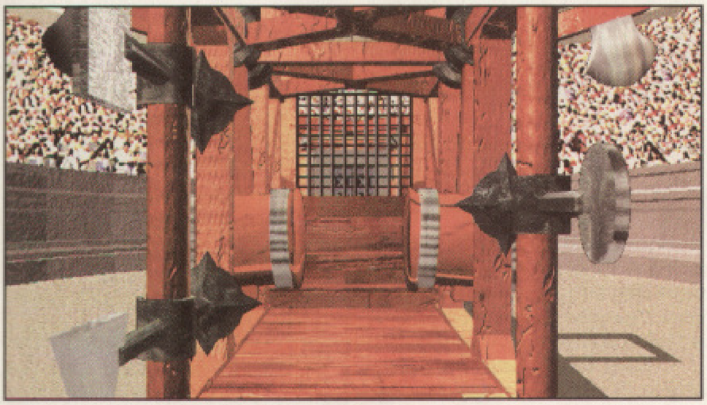
HELL CAB...



...MYST



(Above) Travelling time with one of the Devil's minions isn't all bad, you know. Occasionally you get to meet luvverly laydies, like this 'un.



Hell Cab starts out slowly with a gentle exploration of the mysteriously empty Empire State Building. You can see Baltimore at the top, says Raul, the ever-helpful guide. But does he mean Baltimore the State or the dishevelled character who keeps trying to tap you for money? There are fine views through the binoculars but nothing else appears to be of much interest here.

Returning to the cab, Raul informs you it's time to take in the Coliseum in Rome — in AD59! And Nero's is not best pleased to see you turn up. You are locked up behind bars while he decides your fate. And you know it is going to be very messy and very, very nasty.

Eventually Nero presents you with three fates worse than death. The first is taking on a gladiator in mortal combat. The second is running the Gauntlet — a sort Generation Game-style obstacle race where mere public humiliation is replaced with bone-crushing, spike-impaling, blood-soaked pain and madness. The third choice is feeding ladies to the lions. Not the easiest choices, you will agree. Throwing ladies to the lions is the coward's way out and condemns you to Hell. The remaining choices just delay the inevitable.

My initial conflict with the Gladiator was a little one-sided. I had failed to find any weapons and went into battle with just my 'I Love New York' carrier bag, a cashcard and a fistfull of dollars. I didn't last long. The carrier bag, by the way, is the inventory and is used to carry any useful objects you find..

I fared a little better at running the gauntlet. But here I suffered not because of incompetence but because of the game's speed. To dodge maces, swinging battle-axes and wooden hammers depends on timing — it's critical, in fact. It was fiendishly difficult to try to judge the right time to make a move. That's my excuse anyway. Anyway, the outcome was a trip to Hell and back.

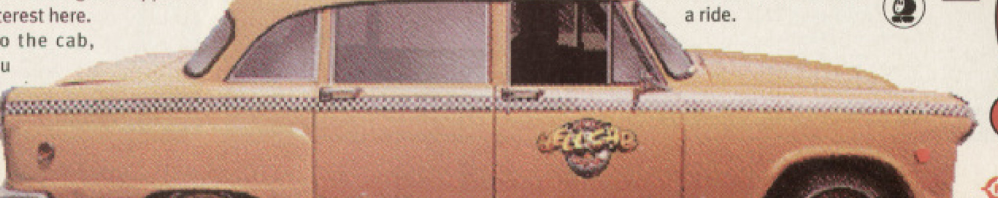
Should you manage to survive and complete the level you will find that each time zone contains a 'doorway' back to the present and the Empire State Building. And, of course, the maniac Raul waiting with the meter running and another little sight-seeing excursion all ready for you.

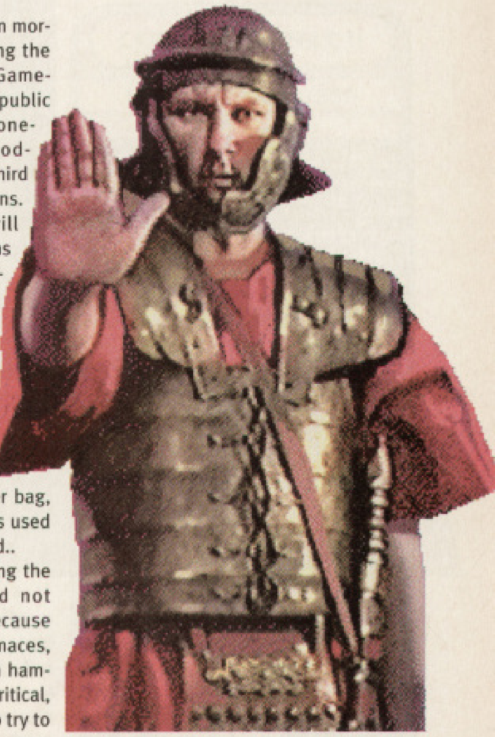
Essentially, Hell Cab is a point-'n'-click adventure spiced up with some neat graphics, as would be expected from the creator of Batman: Digital Justice, Pepe Moreno. The cursor allows you to move about, look up and down, grab items and talk to characters.

As an adventure it is not mind-bogglingly difficult, but there is on major problem — speed. The manual warns that the game's pace may be drastically slowed if you run Hell Cab with Windows' virtual memory turned on. And how! The 33MHz 486 I ran this game on nearly had a seizure. For too much of the time Hell Cab was hideously, evilly, brain-decayingly slow.

The sound is also a little dodgy in places and the music — while not constant — can be infuriating. The tune played in the lift sequences was just as its real-life counterpart — dreadful.

Deep within Hell Cab is a good game trying to get out but a slowish start to the action, handicapped by slow gameplay speed, makes it a time-consuming struggle to get into. But make the effort and you'll be driven to distraction and taken for one Hell of a ride.





HELL CAB ^{CD}

TIME-WARNER/PEPE MORENO

(0604) 790764

£49.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, SVGA, 640K, 3Mb of RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Any Windows-compatible soundcard.

*THE **GOOD...***

- Interesting storyline — after all, wouldn't you like to go on a Hellish journey through time and space?
- Take's a while to get into — the wandering around the Empire State Building is very dull.
- Good fun once it gets going, though.
- Some excellent graphics.

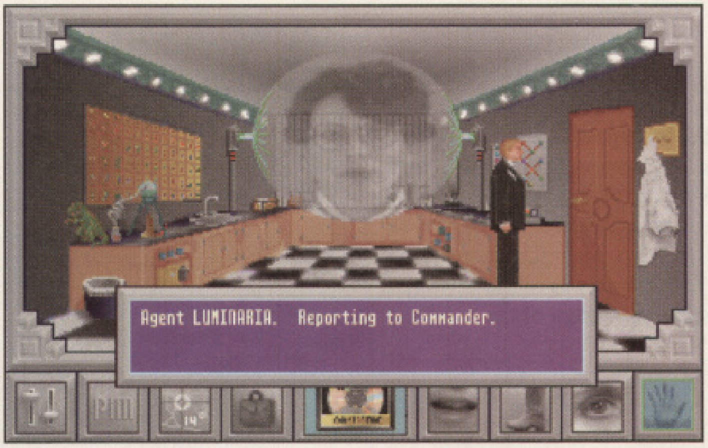
*...AND THE **BAD***

- Slow, slow, quick-quick slow game speed saps the strength of even the most enthusiastic player.

OVERALL

61%

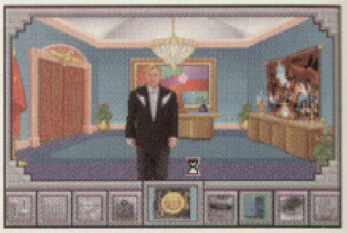
David Upchurch travels to a bizarre alternate dimension in Castleworks' new graphic adventure.



Agent LUMINARIA. Reporting to Commander.

(Left) Constantine in his secret base where he plots against the Commies.

(Above) She looks miserable — she was probably playing Red Hell before I called.



See that 'hourglass' icon down near Constantine's leg? That pops up whenever the game is thinking or accessing the hard drive. Get used to it, because you'll see a lot of it throughout the game.

Red Hell

What if the Russians had developed the Atomic Bomb first? And what if they had used this fearful new super weapon to defeat Germany in World War 2? And what if the Ruskies hadn't stopped there, but had carried on to spread their Communist rule over most of the planet?

It is upon such 'What if?' speculation that the whole premise of Red Hell is based. Set in the year 2020, the Russian government's stranglehold on technological and intellectual freedom, combined with a futile and resource-draining war with the Japanese Empire, has brought the world to the brink of ecocide.

Your view of this dark alternate future is through the eyes of Mark Constantine, a man who leads a strange and dangerous double life. While he pretends to be a biochemist working tirelessly for the Soviets, he is, in fact, secret leader of the 'Unknowns', a resistance movement dedicated to toppling the oppressive ruling regime.

The game starts with Constantine making a routine visit to his Russian superiors. There he accidentally learns that the authorities have issued a termination warrant on his wayward son who, it seems, has been poking his nose where it's not wanted. But what starts as a race against time to save his son rapidly develops into a struggle to save the world...

Red Hell deserves praise for its unique, 'adult' plot. It's a pity then that in almost every other department the game is poor verging on the abysmal.

For a start the graphics are — let's make no bones about this — crap, being both poorly drawn and stiffly animated, conveying precious little sense of a society on the brink of collapse. But you could live with that.

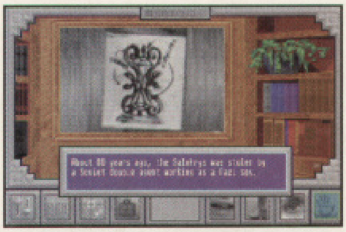
And then there's the supremely unfriendly icon interface. If you want to, say, pick up an item (a fairly common occurrence in games like this) you can't just click on the object of your desire and and collect it — that'd be far too easy. Instead you've actually got to guide Constantine to within 'grabbing' range and *then* pick it up. The same cumbersome rules apply to anything from talking to someone (in which case you practically end up standing on top of them) to looking at something. But you could also live with that.

And let's not forget the fiddly nature of walking around, which makes even the theoretically simple exercise of moving from one room to another, let alone negotiate your way around a desk, a tricky and oh-so-infuriating exercise in mouse control and plain old trial and error. But you could *even* live with that.

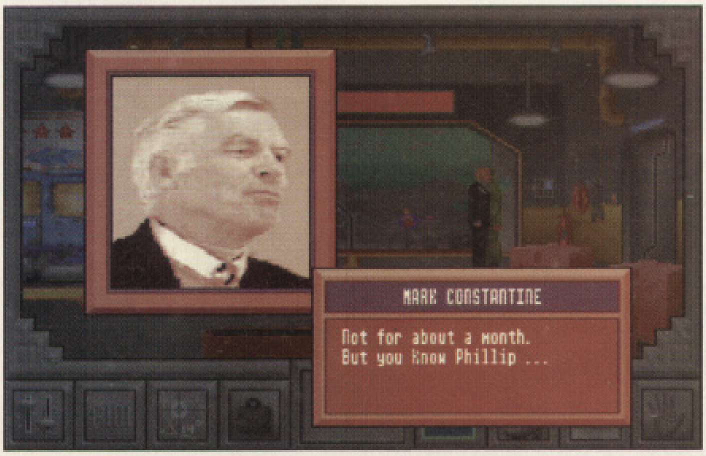
What you most definitely *can't* live with is how *bloody* long the game takes to process even the most basic of commands. Want to have a look in your inventory? Then be prepared for a good five or so seconds' wait between clicking on the icon and anything appearing. And that's on a good day.

These awful, brain-numbing delays turn what should, by rights, have been a very enjoyable and different adventure into an farce that would test the patience of a retarded snail.

Red Hell. Hmmm, well it's Hell alright...



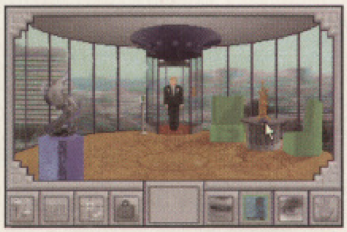
(Left) Hmmm, absholutely fashinating. Pay attention during the cutaway sequences, as they invariably contain information of key importance to the plot.



MARK CONSTANTINE

Not for about a month.
But you know Phillip ...

(Below) During talks with people you're treated to a close-up digitised animation of the chatterers wobbling their heads about. Isn't technology a wonderful thing?



(Below) Phwoar crikey! Just take a gander at those ber-rilliant *graphics*! Who needs games like Day Of The Tentacle or Beneath A Steel Sky when Red Hell looks like this? (Answer: we all do.)

RED HELL

CYBERDREAMS/CASTLEWORKS

(071) 328 3267

£39.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 25Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- An intriguing and potentially absorbing adventure...

...AND THE BAD

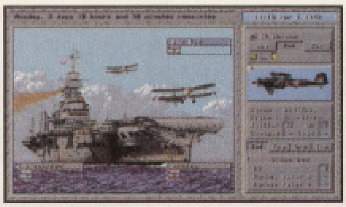
- ...Ruined by a clumsy player interface...
- ...And painfully slow response time to *any* command.
- The graphics are pretty awful too.
- Please feel free to add your own derogatory comments in the space provided below:

OVERALL

33%

Alex Fraser sets sail with EA's strategic sea-faring sequel.

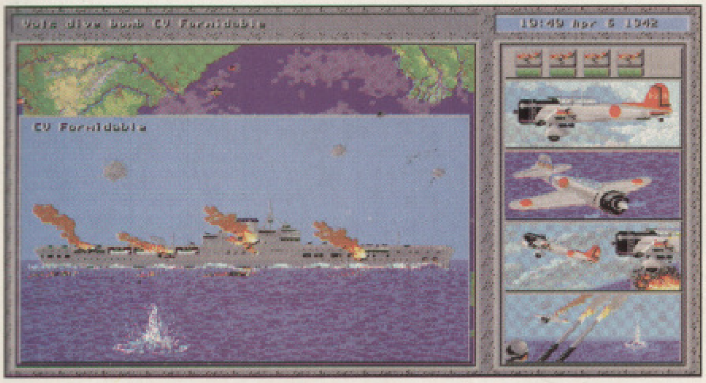
Carriers At War II



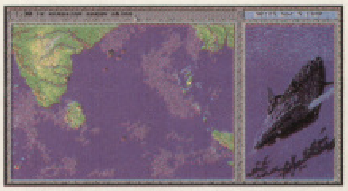
It's August 20th, 1936. Enemy ships are in the vicinity, the weather's closing in, and you've got a whole decade of naval warfare depicted in repulsive EGA-like colours ahead of you. Life on the ocean waves is tough.

Carriers At War II is a strategy game based around carrier operations in the Pacific up to 1946. It has all the hallmarks of a strategy game, including a hex map and pauses while the machine works out percentages in its electronic head — much like the first CAW game.

A little too much like it, in fact, because not a lot has changed since the well-received original. Okay, so the graphics have been slightly jazzed up (although you'd hardly notice by today's standards) and the control system's undergone a tweak or two, but by and large I had to wonder what the boys at SSG had been up to for the past year.



The gameplay's still fair, with a decent manual explaining how to get your task forces up and sailing, and I have to say that the computer simulates a pretty mean admiral. However, nothing about it really grabbed me in that clenched teeth, cat and mouse, trying to out-smart your dastardly opponent as he plots your demise kind of way that I like to see in a strategy game.



Just because there's less action and more time to think doesn't mean there needn't be any tension. Quite the opposite, perhaps, and it's because of this that I couldn't get into Carriers At War II. There are just far too many far better strategy games around, even in the field of naval combat.

CARRIERS AT WAR II

ELECTRONIC ARTS/SSG

(0753) 549442

£44.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 12Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The computer opponent's artificial intelligence is superb.

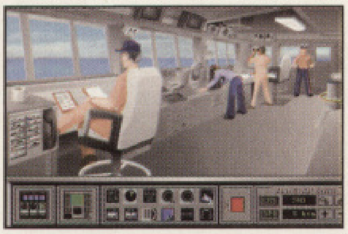
...AND THE BAD

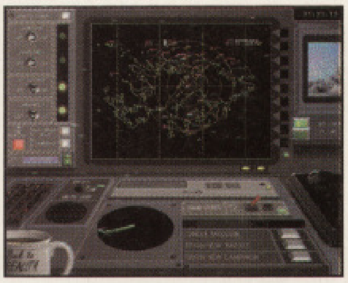
- The sound and graphics are pretty much as crap as the original.

OVERALL

69%

Alex Fraser boards Aegis to see if it's a sinker or a floater.



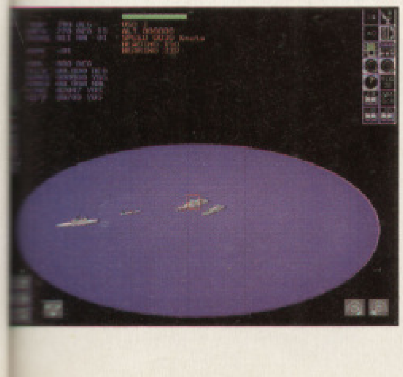


Aegis: Guardian of the Fleet CD

Second World War battleships, modern day subs or any number of aircraft carriers, they're all on offer at the moment if you're a PC gamesplayer. Aegis is TimeWarner's entry effort into the market, giving us the chance to command an ultra-modern Ticonderoga class cruiser.

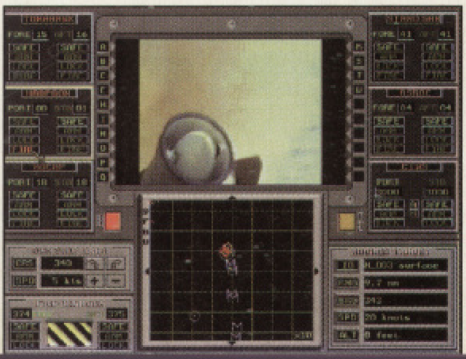
For ultra-modern you can read ultra-confusing. From the minute you start up (with some very nifty music, but what less could you expect from the lads at Warner?) you get one of those zillion button control panels that only a trained NASA engineer can hope to figure out... and that's just the options screen.

The graphics are pretty much a let down. They're SVGA, but all the displays look flat, lifeless and dull. Occasional full-motion video just succeeded in reminding me how few other interesting views there actually are. You get more external shots from Seawolf, and that's a submarine sim for crying out loud!



Gameplay's always one thing that can pull a boring game out of the slime of mediocrity but since Aegis is about as user-friendly as an instruction manual in Japanese, you won't find it much of a redeeming feature here.

As slow as a hard-core strategy game, as shallow as the most basic of shoot-'em-ups, and as tough to learn the controls of as the most realistic of simulators, Aegis offers all the frustrations from the different game genres, seemingly without the good sides of any. I know that sounds harsh, but it's essentially fair.



For all its radars and sonars and scenarios, Aegis is best left in dry dock, hopefully to be scrapped. The technical spec may be impressive but it was obsolete before it even hit the shelves. Get Great Naval Battles II, get Seawolf, get any one of the many alternatives, because Aegis will take weeks to get your attention which it will then completely fail to keep.

AEGIS: GUARDIAN OF THE FLEET CD

TIME WARNER/IN-HOUSE

(0604) 790785

£TBA OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 386, SVGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Lots of views and icons to play with if you get the hang of things.

...AND THE BAD

- Too many views and icons to make it even remotely easy to get into.

OVERALL

47%

Diggers

David Upchurch goes underground with Millennium's other-worldly mining game.

Aren't PC games great? They're like a magical portal leading to your wildest fantasies, giving you the chance to become anything from a sword-wielding barbarian to a alien-slaying starpilot, or a whip-cracking film hero to a wannabe pirate, or a platform-hopping Ninja to a, er... dirt-shovelling miner.

Now don't get me wrong — I've got a lot of respect for those brave men and women who work down coal mines and the like. It's a tough, dangerous job that I, being the soft, work-shy lump of lard that I am, wouldn't last five minutes in. However, it's fair to say that in terms of glamour, it's a job that rates pretty far down on the scale.

Which means that Diggers, a game based around that whole grimy business, is on a pretty sticky wicket from the start. That the game actually proves to be quite enjoyable is all credit to the good people at Millennium and their game-designing talents. Admittedly, it's not perfect by any means but... well, we'll get to that later.

Apparently it is the 412th day on the planet Zarg. This isn't just any day, oh no, for it's the start of the annual dig-a-thon, when mining companies from across the galaxy compete in a race to extract as much valuable ore from the planet's bowels as possible.

You, of course, play one of these would-be mining magnates. Your first task is to decide which of the four races of alien miners to employ, as each have their own individual strengths and weaknesses. The F'targs, for example, are fast workers but get bored easily, while the Quarriors are strong but utterly thick.

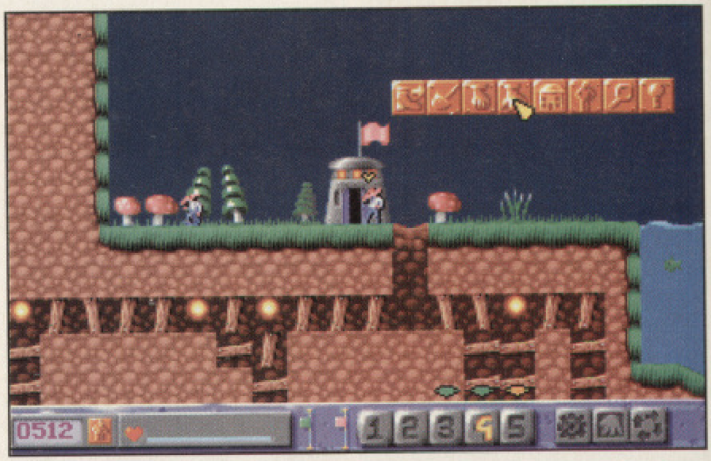
Then there are the dwarvish Grablans who dig like demons but fight like girls, and the druidic Habbish who have a tendency to down tools and start praying at the drop of a hard-hat. It's important to choose wisely, because you stick with the same race for the rest of the game.

For the purposes of the contest, the planet's surface is divided into 33 connecting zones. Each zone must be 'won' in turn by digging up a certain amount of ore as specified by the Zargon mining authorities, or by eliminating all the diggers of any rivals competing in the same zone, with the amount of ore needed to win a zone and the intelligence of your opponents increasing as you progress through the game.

You have just five diggers in your mining team, each of whom is controlled using a point-'n'-click icon interface. Via this interface you can get your diggers to perform a variety of actions, such as move, dig, pick up or drop objects, scavenge for ore and so on.

It's important to keep your diggers busy. Leave them alone doing the same thing for too long and they'll get bored, wander off and generally make a nuisance of themselves (I have similar problems controlling Dean and Alex). At best this is annoying, at worst disastrous. As you cycle through your team members to see what they're up to, you'll often discover one of them drowning in a pool of water or about to offer himself as lunch to one of Zarg's carnivorous lifeforms.

It's in such life or death moments, when prompt action can save a life, that

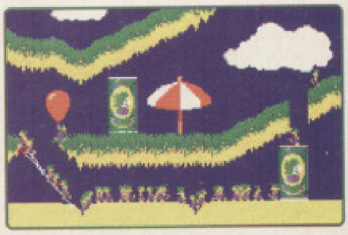


The icon panel is brought up with a click on the right mouse button and can be positioned anywhere on the screen, which means it never gets in the way of the, ahem, 'action'. Certain icons have sub-panels to click on, and finding your way around in a hurry is not always easy.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

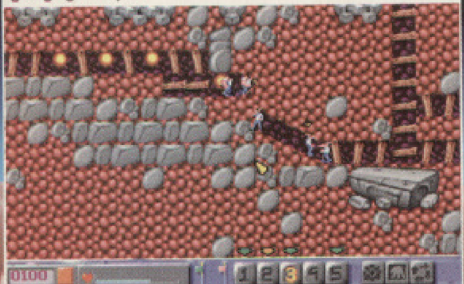
Although the two games differ quite heavily in terms of gameplay, Diggers has several similarities to Lemmings. Both games feature tiny icon-controlled characters who can do a multitude of things, although Lemmings wins hands-down here with its much better designed interface and much cuter sprites and animations. Lemmings is also a lot more fun.

DIGGERS IS...

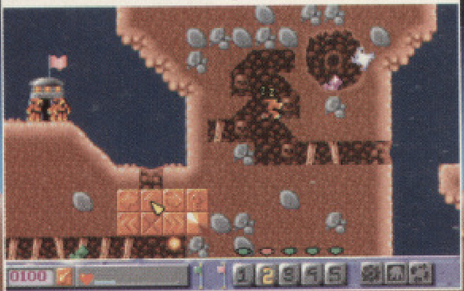


...A BORING VERSION OF LEMMINGS.

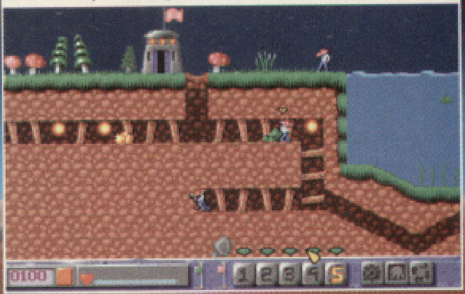
Look's like trouble ahead — these two teams of diggers are about to come face to face, so you can bet there will be almighty scrap. Be ready to get your guys out if things start going against you.



Is Diggers a platform game? Well, not quite — although you'll find you have to perform some nimble running and jumping to reach the more out-of-the-way secret caverns. The rewards are worth it, though...



Look at all those juicy gems — lovely! Note how I've left one of my diggers standing idly beside a deep pool of water. This is not clever, because he may easily get bored and end up accidentally drowning himself.



problems with the otherwise easy-to-use interface crop up — basically the icons are just too small and fiddly for comfort, and there's nothing more annoying than losing a digger just because you couldn't click on an icon in time.

As you dig, gems and lumps of ore will be uncovered and these can be traded in for cash. You can then use this money to buy equipment that'll help you excavate at a faster rate, such as dynamite or automated mole machines. At least, that's the theory.

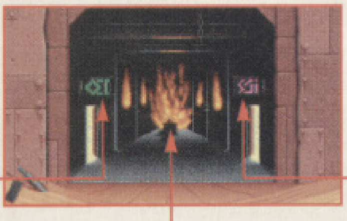
In practice the equipment is so pricey that it's really not worth buying in the early, easier levels, where you're better off keeping your team slaving away at the pitface and saving your cash — that way you'll actually achieve your 'win' quota faster.

Trouble is, this makes an already slow-paced game even slower and, frankly, a bit of a grind to play at times. The game's publisher Millennium claim that the beauty of the game is that you can try different strategies to win the game. Well, true, you can — but as the one outlined above gets the results fastest then you'd be a bit stupid to try any other. The only trouble with this strategy is it's boring. But then, nobody said that making a million was meant to be exciting, did they? Er, except they probably did.

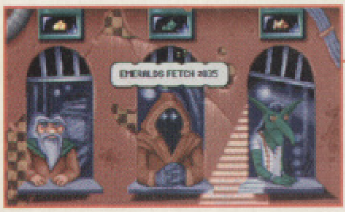
On the later levels, when you've got unfeasibly vast amounts of ore to mine and there are serious attacks from enemy companies to fend off, then things start to hot up and the special equipment isn't just handy, it's essential for success. Trouble is, most games-players will have probably given up and found something more interesting to do long before they get to them.

Diggers couldn't be called a bad game by any means, but it lacks the addictive 'hooks' and variety of game-play that keep you coming back for more — when all is said and done, each level looks and plays much like the rest. If you've got sufficient stamina and patience to persevere through the dull bits then you'll ultimately this a moderately rewarding, though sadly unexciting experience.

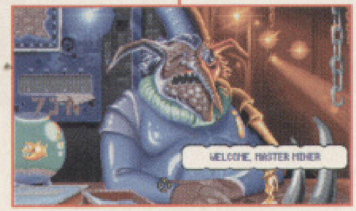
CAN YOU DIG IT?



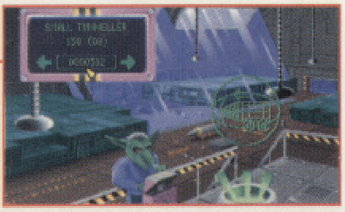
(Right) This is the main entrance to the Zargon Trading Centre. While mining a zone can come here at any time you like to sell your gems or to buy new equipment.



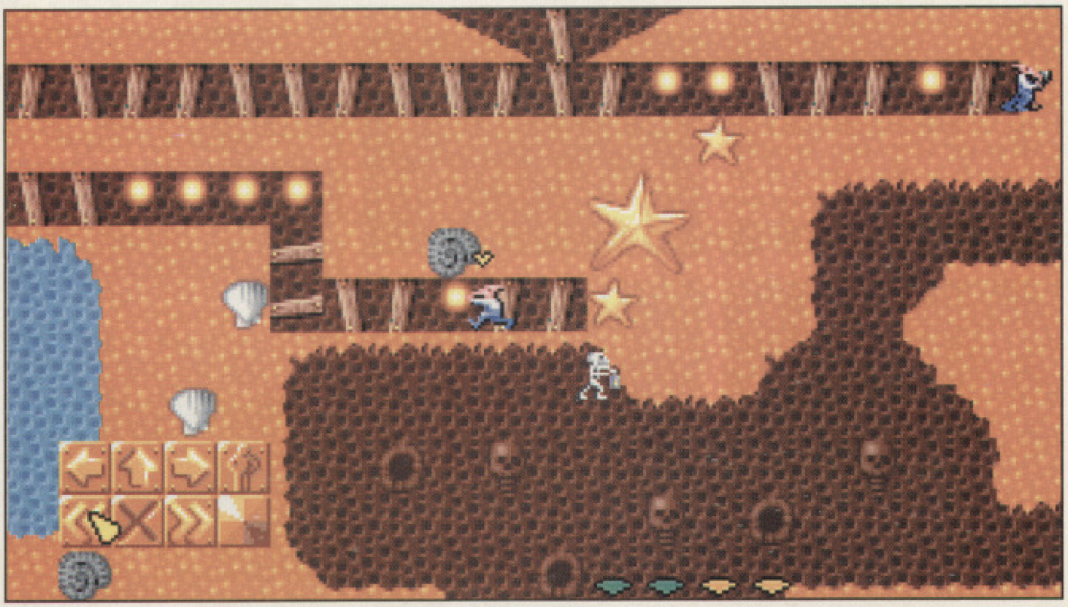
(Above) Once you've mined some gems and ore you can trade with these merchants for cash. Exchange rates fluctuate, so you might want to hold out for a better price.



(Below) Got any spare cash burning a hole in your pocket? Then why not spend it here in the equipment shop? There are loads of goodies on offer to help you dig.

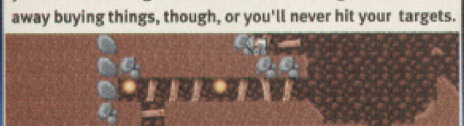


(Left) In the Minister For Trade's office you choose your team of diggers and your next mining zone. You can also save your game here —which you're advised to do regularly.



(Above) The Diggers have a degree of artificial intelligence, and will react in a reasonably sensible manner to changes in their local environment. This chap, for example, is running away from a skeleton — wise move.

These mole machines are great for mining out huge areas and they're so easy to use — just point 'em in the direction you want them to go and set them off. Don't get too carried away buying things, though, or you'll never hit your targets.



DIGGERS

MILLENNIUM/IN-HOUSE

(0223) 844894

£34.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- You certainly couldn't ask for much of a bigger challenge.

...AND THE BAD

- You could ask for a more interesting one, though; the endless mining gets very tedious at times.
- Couldn't the icons have been a little less fiddly?
- Graphically very bland; the backgrounds are dull and the diggers are poorly animated and have next to no charm.

OVERALL

73%

Spiritual Warfare

Alex Fraser converts Sinners by pelting them with fruit in Alive Software's latest.

Spiritual Warfare is a game with a message, a Christian message to be precise. According to the game's publishers, their aims were to create a game that was free of violence and titillation, that imparted Christian values to the player and that was also fun and enjoyable at the same time. Well, maybe they've achieved the first two aims (although that's debatable) but they sure as heck haven't achieved the latter.

The game casts you as a soldier in the army of the Lord, whose task it is to explore a massive city and try to locate the six pieces of the Armour Of God, a scenario drawn from Ephesians 6:13-18 (look it up if you don't believe me).

Your search is hindered, however, by all manner of energy-sapping non-believers who'll do their best to get in your way. Luckily, help is on your side in the form of fruit — yes, fruit — which represents a variety of Christian virtues. Once found and collected they can be hurled at the scurrying sinners in order to convert them to the Faith, whereupon they fall to their knees in prayer then disappear.

Each piece of armour is guarded by a sort of 'Super Sinner' which, in classic shoot-'em-up (or should that be convert-'em-up?) tradition, has to be 'fruited' several times before it'll relinquish its treasure. As you collect the armour you also gain special powers, such as the ability to push blocks and to withstand explosions.

In addition there are other objects that need to be collected to make progress, including tickets that lets you take the train to other parts of the city and a raft that allows you to cross areas of water, and you can get advice as to where they are by talking to the occasional Christian Helpers you meet on your travels.

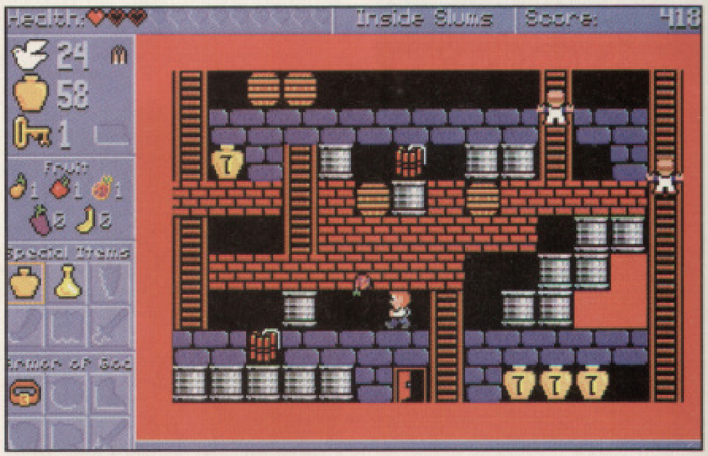
You're thinking "Fair enough, sounds like the game's got all the ingredients of a decent enough, if simplistic, arcade adventure." Well, yes, the ingredients are there alright, but they appear to have been mixed by the most incompetent cook since that Swedish chef from The Muppets.

The game looks like the sort of thing that Mastertronic used to bung out for û1.99 on the Spectrum, mainly thanks to its 'minimalist' approach to the graphics — watching the tiny, dodgily animated sprites juddering around the flick-screen (!) scrolling locations you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd been transported back to 1985.

Sound is equally appalling. As if the mind-numbing rendition of 'What A Friend We Have In Jesus' warbling away in the background were not bad enough, you also have to endure shrill, ear-splitting bleeps and burbles every time you lob a pomegranate or pick up an object.

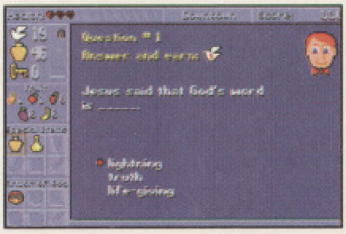
And sadly Spiritual Warfare isn't even saved (no pun intended) by its gameplay. It's much too basic to be enjoyable to anyone over ten, yet much too difficult — the non-believers move incredibly fast even on a 286 — to appeal to anyone under that age. Yes, so the game allows you restart the game from where you died as much as you like, but that's not fun — or challenging.

I'm not really what you'd call a religious person, but I respect the right of Christians to be able to choose to play games that reflect their values and beliefs. However, surely such games should also be good?



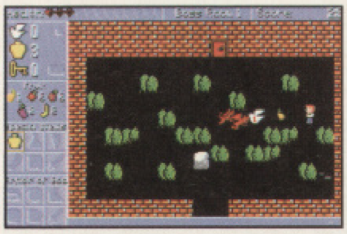
(Above) Hmmm, ladders and platform action at its best.

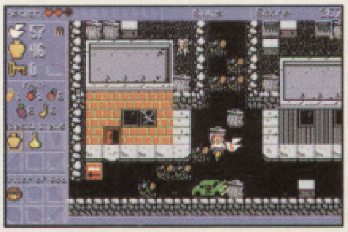
(Below) Every so often an Angel will float onto the screen, and if you manage to touch him then you'll enter a Bible trivia sub-game, where every correct answer rewards you with extra points and health.

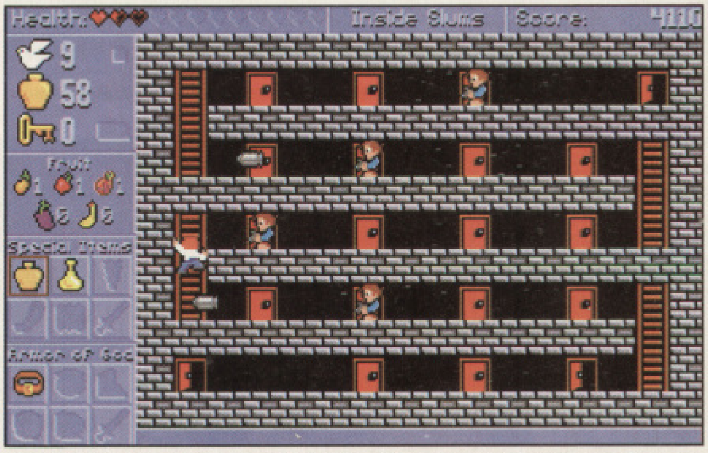

Question # 1
Answer and earn

Jesus said that God's word is ______

- lightning
- truth
- life-giving







(Top left) Every piece of the Armour of God is protected by a super-tough guardian. Given the ropey controls, getting past them is more a matter of luck than skill.

(Above) Alive Software claim that Spiritual Warfare is non-violent. Obviously being attacked by blokes firing big bullets at you isn't violent, then.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

ALIVE SOFTWARE/WISDOM TREE

(0454) 415697

£32.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

16MHz 286, EGA, 640K and 1Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Er... it made me laugh, I'll say that for it.

...AND THE ***BAD***

- Blimey, where do I begin?
- Well, I could go on about the dead crummy graphics...
- Or the ear-piercing and monotonous sound...
- Or the super-shallow, pathetically primitive gameplay...
- Or the... Look, I think you must get the point by now.

OVERALL

11%

Doofus

David Upchurch takes Prestige's new dog for a walk.

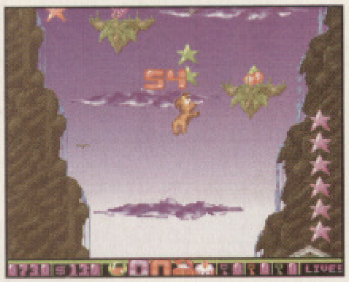
There's no happier sight than that of a young boy playing with his dog — unless, I hasten to add, the boy in question is called Tim and his dog is named Doofus. For these are the joint 'heroes' pf Prestige Software's Doofus, a platform game with a difference — the main one being it's not very good.

Tim and his canine chum have, by means not adequately explained, been whisked to a bizarre world full of nasties, pits and platforms. Their aim is simple: to return home by bouncing through the colourful landscapes without getting killed in the process.

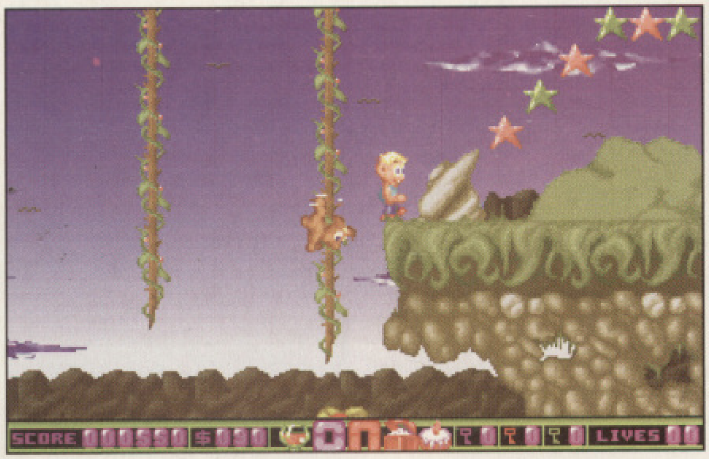
Tim is aided in this mighty task by an unlimited supply of rubber ball-type things that he can lob at anything that looks dangerous, and he also has a more restricted supply of magic potions and special abilities that enable him to do such wonderful albeit temporary things as float around in a bubble, or make Doofus invisible.

Doofus is a faithful hound and follows Tim's every move, something which often leads him straight in the path of one of the meanies. This is not good, because if either Tim or Doofus comes a cropper then you lose a life.

Doofus isn't very good at all. The gameplay is shallow, lacking in variety and often annoying — having to worry about keeping Doofus out of harm's way as well as Tim is a pain in the neck and not at all enjoyable. At the time of going to press the game's retail price has yet to be confirmed, but whatever it is it's probably too much.



(Above) Every so often Tim and Doofus will come across a kennel, the portal to a points-packed sub-game.



DOOFUS

Prestige/In-house

(0727) 868005

£TBA Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 1Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Er, um, the graphics are okay, I suppose.

...AND THE ***BAD***

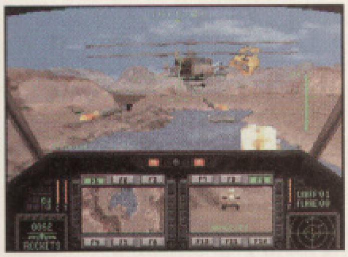
- Dull and frequently frustrating to play — and that's being kind.

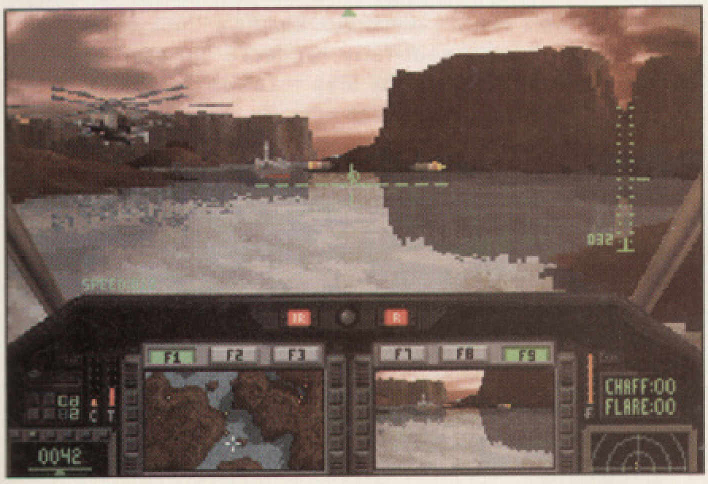
OVERALL

31%

COMANCHE: Maximum Overkill CD

David Upchurch goes hunting in Novalogic's high-tech chopper.





As if fans of 3D flight games didn't have enough techy-head terms to come to grips with, what with most games these days boasting 'Gouraud shading' and 'texture mapping' as standard, along came Comanche: Maximum Overkill with its 'Voxel Space' landscaping technology.

So, as our mission is to inform as well as to entertain, let me explain — simply, frankly and concisely — what 'Voxel Space' landscaping technology does. Basically it generates a rugged and realistic looking 3D terrain that you can travel over. Well, if you squint and slightly cross your eyes it looks realistic, anyway. If you don't it tends to look like a nasty explosion in a brick factory.

Still, it's works reasonably well, and is certainly used to great effect in Comanche: Maximum Overkill. Although the game may look like a flight sim, Comanche is actually a simplistic out-and-out shoot-'em-up. Piloting a heavily-armed chopper over the aforementioned 'Voxel Space' landscapes, you have to destroy dozens of enemy airborne and land-based targets.

And that's it, basically. Oh, the terrains change from time to time, and the enemy get tougher to kill as you plough through the 55 missions, but effectively it's just more (and more, and more) of the same 'bang, bang, you're dead' gameplay. And what starts out as great fun rapidly becomes plain boring.

You may have noticed that I haven't mentioned the fact that the game comes on CD. That's because, apart from the obvious savings of having the original game and data disk on silver disc rather than bunging up your hard drive, there are no enhancements. No, not one. Boo.

COMANCHE: Maximum Overkill CD

Optima/Novalogic

(0494) 488551

£49.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards.

THE ***GOOD...***

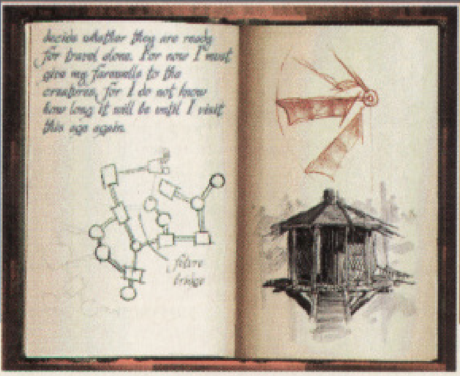
- Enough top-level action to keep even the most avid shoot-'em-up fan happy.

...AND THE ***BAD***

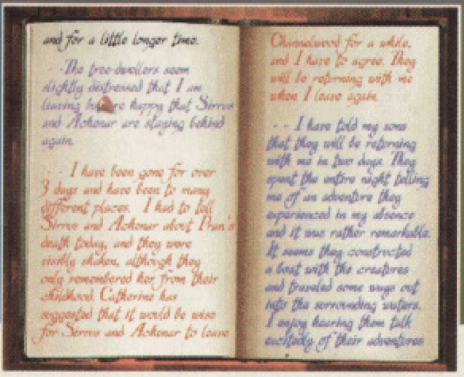
- Even top-level action gets boring eventually.

OVERALL

73%



decide whether they are ready for travel alone. For now I must give my farewells to the creatures, for I do not know how long it will be until I visit this age again.



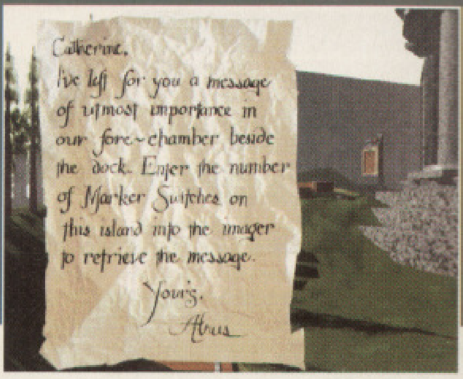
and for a little longer time.

-- The tree-dwellers seem slightly distressed that I am leaving but are happy that Sirrus and Achenar are staying behind again.

-- I have been gone for over 3 days and have been to many different places. I had to tell Sirrus and Achenar about Ti'ana's death today, and they were visibly shaken, although they only remembered her from their childhood. Catherine has suggested that it would be wise for Sirrus and Achenar to leave

Channelwood for a while, and I have to agree. They will be returning with me when I leave again.

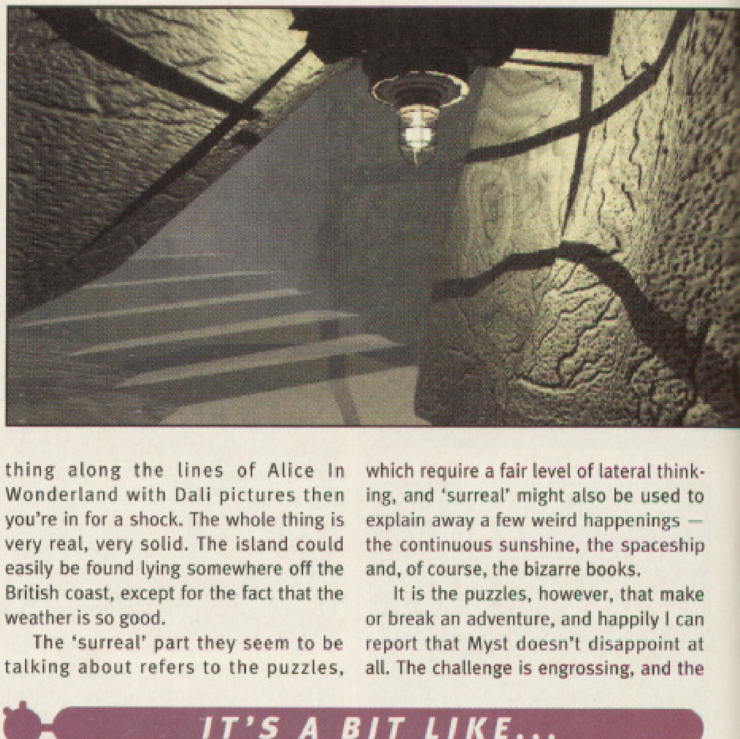
-- I have told my sons that they will be returning with me in two days. They spent the entire night telling me of an adventure they experienced in my absence and it was rather remarkable. It seems they constructed a boat with the creatures and traveled some ways out into the surrounding waters. I enjoy hearing them talk excitedly of their adventures



Catherine,
I've left for you a message
of utmost importance in
our fore-chamber beside
the dock. Enter the number
of Marker Switches on
this island into the imager
to retrieve the message.
Yours,
Atrus

Adventures come and go, but Alex Fraser is stuck on a tiny island so he's not going anywhere until he solves the MYSTery. Ho-ho...

Myst CD



(Below) What's lurking just around the next corner? A demon, perhaps? But I'm forgetting myself, this isn't Doom. If you want action, you won't find much on offer here.

Windows used to be so boring, the kind of place where you'd only catch accountants playing with their spreadsheets. Oh, there'd be the occasional game of Minesweeper or Solitaire, but quality games were strictly a DOS thing. Now, however, you need never leave the comfort of icons and pointers to cash in on the new generation of entertainment products.

Myst is a good example of what I'm talking about. It's an adventure that's been tenderly nurtured over two years by the people at Cyan, who'd previously stuck to children's products. The care they've put in really shines through; you can probably see from the screenshots that this is quality stuff.

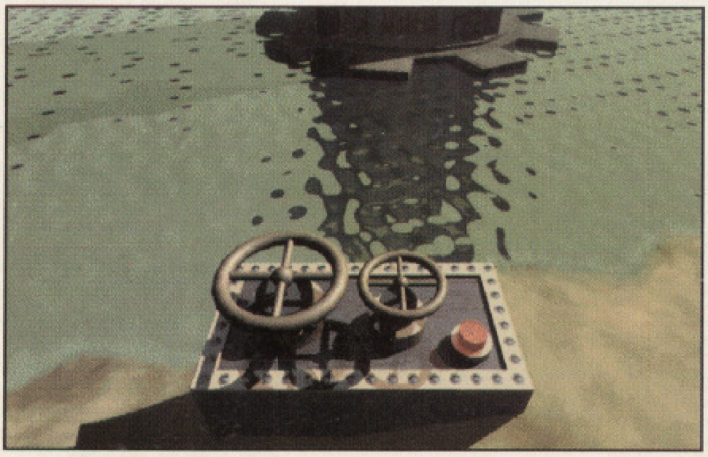
Also, in line with the Cyan policy of using 'non-threatening exploratory environments' (yes, Cyan are an American development team — as if you couldn't tell) there is no gory spilling of blood-'n'-guts or frenzied shotgun shooting and chainsaw wielding. In fact, I have yet to find *any* violence of any sort in Myst, which is actually rather refreshing. (Yeah, yeah, call me soft, but I *did*.)

Anyway, this being an adventure game, the story's fairly vital and it goes a bit like this: One day you're innocently reading an old book called Myst which tells of a bizarre island world. When you reach the end you happen to put your hand down on the page and suddenly, faster than you can say "You what!?", you're whisked away through time and space to the island described in the book. And that's all you know. The manual doesn't help you out a whole lot, so there's nothing for it other than to start the game and try to get back home.

The blurb says that Myst is a surrealistic adventure, but if you expect something along the lines of Alice In Wonderland with Dali pictures then you're in for a shock. The whole thing is very real, very solid. The island could easily be found lying somewhere off the British coast, except for the fact that the weather is so good.

The 'surreal' part they seem to be talking about refers to the puzzles, which require a fair level of lateral thinking, and 'surreal' might also be used to explain away a few weird happenings — the continuous sunshine, the spaceship and, of course, the bizarre books.

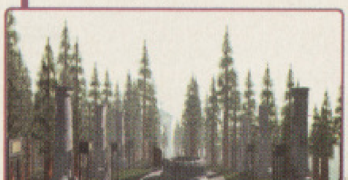
It is the puzzles, however, that make or break an adventure, and happily I can report that Myst doesn't disappoint at all. The challenge is engrossing, and the



The puzzles are based on events that take place in a small area and often require clues from other places. Here you have two valves and a button but what do they do? And how will they help you get to the clock tower across the water?

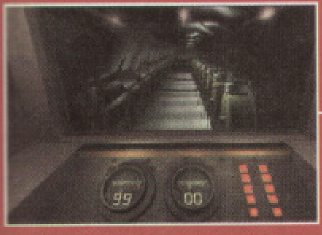
IT'S A BIT LIKE...

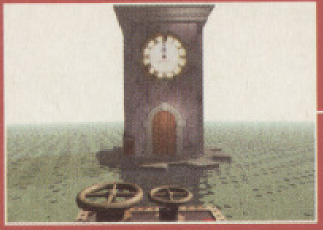
It's not a *bit* like, it's *very much* like EA's The Labyrinth Of Time. Both use beautifully-rendered but static SVGA images that give you the idea that you're looking at a series of photos rather than actually being in the places shown. Both have strong plots, but in the end Myst looks and plays just that little bit better.

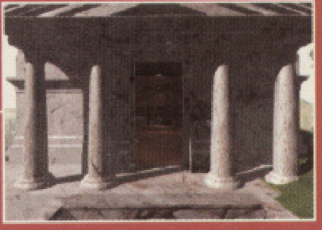


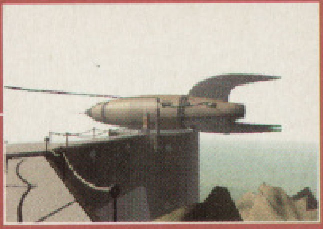
MYST

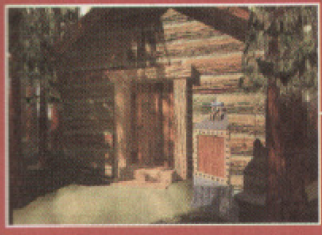
THE LABYRINTH OF TIME

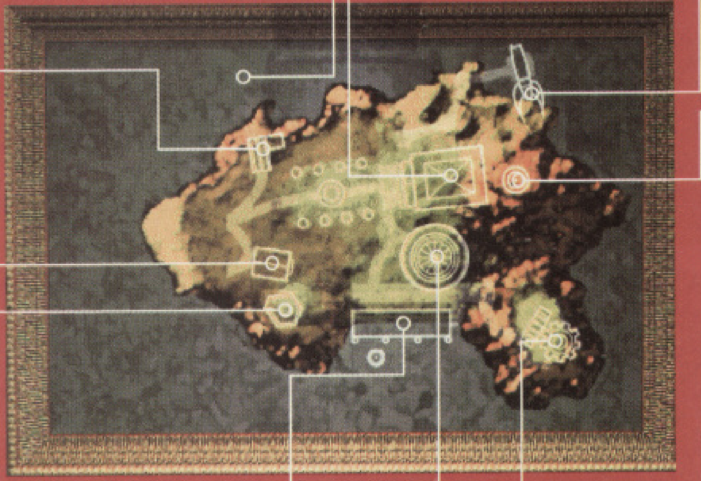

The Power Station: Far, far under the island's forested surface, this is the key to at least one puzzle. More power, Igor!!!

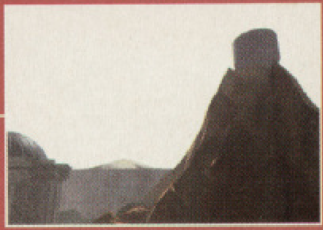

The Clock Tower: Why *is* there a clock tower in the middle of the ocean? It doesn't even work. Not properly, anyway.

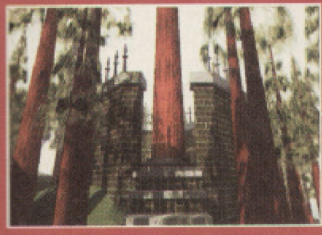

The Library: A building containing lots of books. Since it was a book that got you in this mess, maybe here's a place to start...

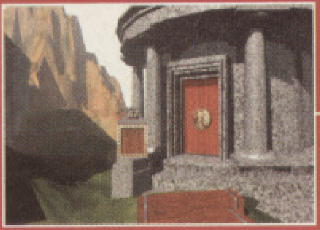

The Spaceship: Is this the way off the island? How do you start it? How do you open the bloody door, in fact?

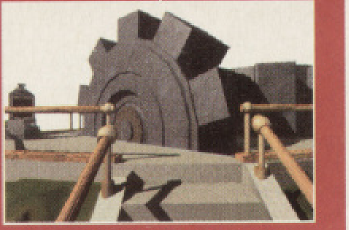

The Log Cabin: Cosy cottage in woodland location. All mod cons, including a boiler, a safe and a valve. But what are they for?

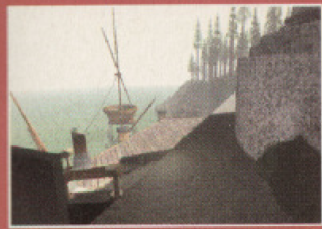



The Tower: This is where it's all at. The one place you'll come back to, time and again – and there's a *lovely* view from the top. All you have to do is figure out how to get there...


The Big Tree: It's big, and it's a tree. And it sits there surrounded by its wall looking big and tree-like. That's it.


The Round House: Inside it's all a bit spartan, and the dentist's chair looks decidedly dodgy....


The Cogs: Most islands have forts and things on the hill overlooking the port, but Myst has cogs. Bizarre!


The Quay: Where all the fun begins. No quay-side cafs or fish &chip shops, but at least there's an occasional seagull.

problems will get you thoroughly involved. Even better news is that the interface is totally unintrusive.

Unlike The Labyrinth Of Time, the Electronic Arts' game which it resembles very closely, Myst has no icons onscreen at all. In fact, there's nothing getting in the way of the gorgeous full-screen SVGA graphics but a little pointer, which indicates where you can travel and occasionally changes shape when you have to manipulate objects.

There's no inventory, because you don't need to carry anything much (although if you're a seasoned adventurer this does feel a bit odd) and the key to the game is simply figuring out what needs to be done. After that, doing it is easy. There's none of the 'If I use item X with object Y, that'll solve that puzzle Z' type of thing which you see in most other adventures.

The other major advantage Myst has over Labyrinth (it's nearest rival) is the ease with which you're able to get around. The island is fairly small, so you won't need to travel huge distances, even when you get into other sections of the story (I can't say any more or it'll spoil your fun). Cyan have also added a 'lightning' mode, whereby you can zip back to a location you've already been to just by clicking on it, even if it's far, far away in the distance. Very handy, and much appreciated.

Presentation-wise, Myst uses two or three pictures from different angles at each location to show you where you are. If you turn around there's no actual scrolling, the screen just fades out and shows you the picture behind you or to your side if there's anything interesting there. At first this is quite confusing, but you soon get used to it.

This takes time as each one has to be loaded from the CD and I can heartily recommend getting a double-speed drive (if you haven't already) because otherwise the few seconds wait between frames can get mightily frustrating after a while. Having said that, I was still willing to play it, even with these waits, because to be honest the CD time lag is my only major gripe about the whole thing.

Myst is something that'll keep you coming back time and time again, and you'll soon find that you'll be bringing your friends round for a bit of extra brain-power and loading it up in the middle of the night when you've woken up with a brilliant idea for how to get off the island. You may not play it solidly for days, but there's still huge value for money here in the long term.

As for me, I'm still there, stuck at the shore-line, trying to figure out how to get the spaceship open. Maybe I'll just write a desperate S.O.S. note and put it in a bottle.

“Please send one copy of the Myst hint book to Alex Fraser, Western Beach, Myst Island...”.

That should do it. In the meanwhile I'll give it another go. Maybe if I just try....

MYST CD

BRODERBUND/CYAN

(0753) 549442

£39.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 386, SVGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland sound-cards.

THE GOOD...

- It's very, very, *very* pretty.
- Even if one puzzle has you stumped you'll always find plenty of others to get your teeth into.
- Lots of long-term appeal – you'll be playing this for months.

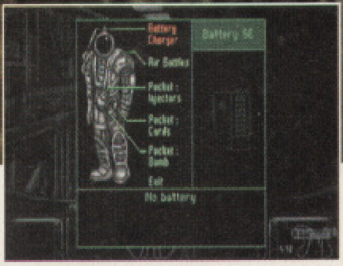
...AND THE BAD

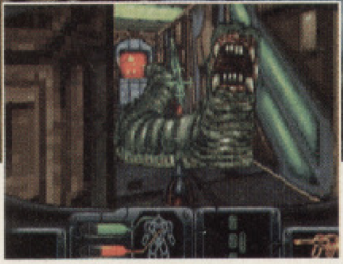
- The screen update is laboriously slow on a single-speed CD-ROM drive.
- Only hard-core adventurers will enjoy the frustration of getting repeatedly and thoroughly stuck.

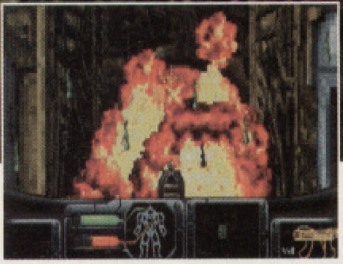
OVERALL

86%

In Extremis





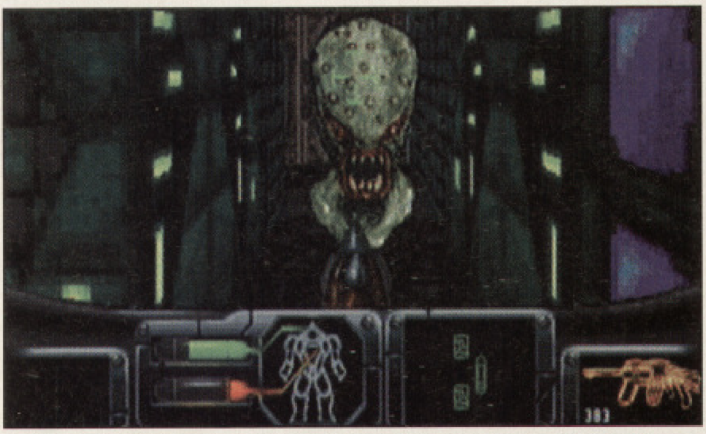


"We're all Doomed!" cries David Upchurch in this rather pathetic intro to US Gold's 3D blaster.

A lot of critics like to draw comparisons between the games industry and the movie industry. And while most of these would-be similarities are slight to say the least, there's one way in which the two industries are very, very alike — namely, the originality-free eagerness of companies to leap on whichever money-making bandwagon is currently in vogue.

Star Wars, E.T. and The Terminator, amongst many others, all spawned a host of generally poor clones trying to cash in on the success of the original. Swap the *movie* names listed above for *game* names and the story's pretty much the same. How about Populous? Or Elite? Or, of course, Wolfenstein...

Which brings us to In Extremis which casts you as Bob Jones, a special agent sent to investigate the mysterious loss of contact with a deep-space research ship. No sooner have you reached it, however, than your scout ship develops a highly explosive engine fault, marooning you on the silent research ship.

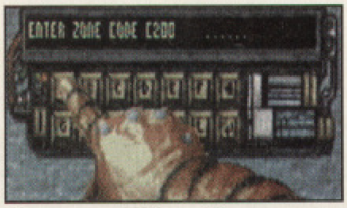


Aaaiiieeee! Bouncing alien heads of death! This sad and slightly pathetic-looking bug is a good example of the, er, 'terrifying' creatures you'll encounter.

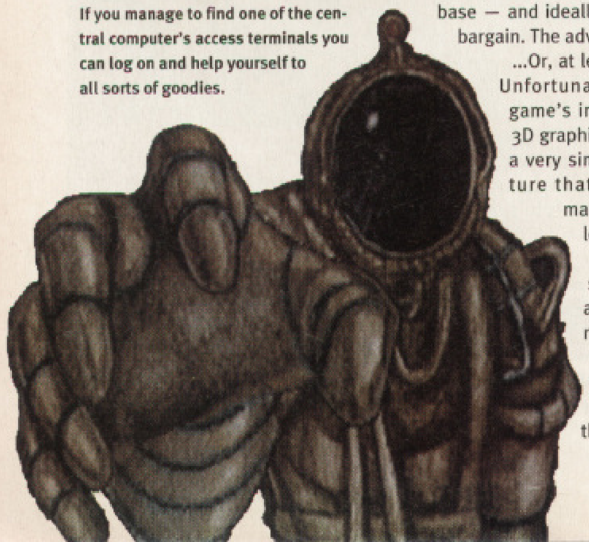
It doesn't take long for you to discover why the ship's crew of scientists and technicians have stopped phoning home — they've been butchered by an invading horde of unbelievably vicious aliens. Somehow you've got to make your way through the ship to its comm station, so that you can beam a warning back to base — and ideally get rescued into the bargain. The adventure begins...

...Or, at least, that's the theory. Unfortunately, strip away the game's impressively 'grungey' 3D graphics and you're left with a very simplistic arcade adventure that would hardly have made the grade in 1984, let alone 1994.

As you wander smoothly but slowly around, blasting the ridiculous-looking and appallingly-animated bugs, you have to locate special cards that'll allow you to 'log on' to the ship's security system, giving you access to maps and extra weapons and equipment, as well as find lift passes so that you can move on to the next sub-deck (effectively the next 'level').



If you manage to find one of the central computer's access terminals you can log on and help yourself to all sorts of goodies.



Obviously the game's designers Blue Sphere hoped that this object hunting would give the game some depth. Well, yes, it does — but only that of a shallow puddle. On the early, relatively compact levels having to explore every nook and cranny isn't much of a pain but later, when the decks become more sprawling, it rapidly becomes plain boring.

Comparisons with iD's Doom are inevitable and, sadly, In Extremis just can't compete: the pace is too slow, the upgrade weapons are pathetically feeble and the levels are claustrophobic and same-y, while the aliens, your supposedly dreaded and nightmare-inducing adversaries, are frankly laughable (although they die — or rather explode — in a suitably gory way, spraying green blood over the screen).

While In Extremis isn't terrible, it isn't great either. It walks that fine line between good and bad known as 'Distinctly Average'. Which probably explains why it gets the rating that it does.

IN EXTREMIS

US GOLD/BLUE SPHERE

(021) 625 3388

£34.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The 3D graphics move very smoothly and are drawn in a suitably grimey, gritty style.
- The urge to get home provides a decent enough hook to keep you going.

...AND THE BAD

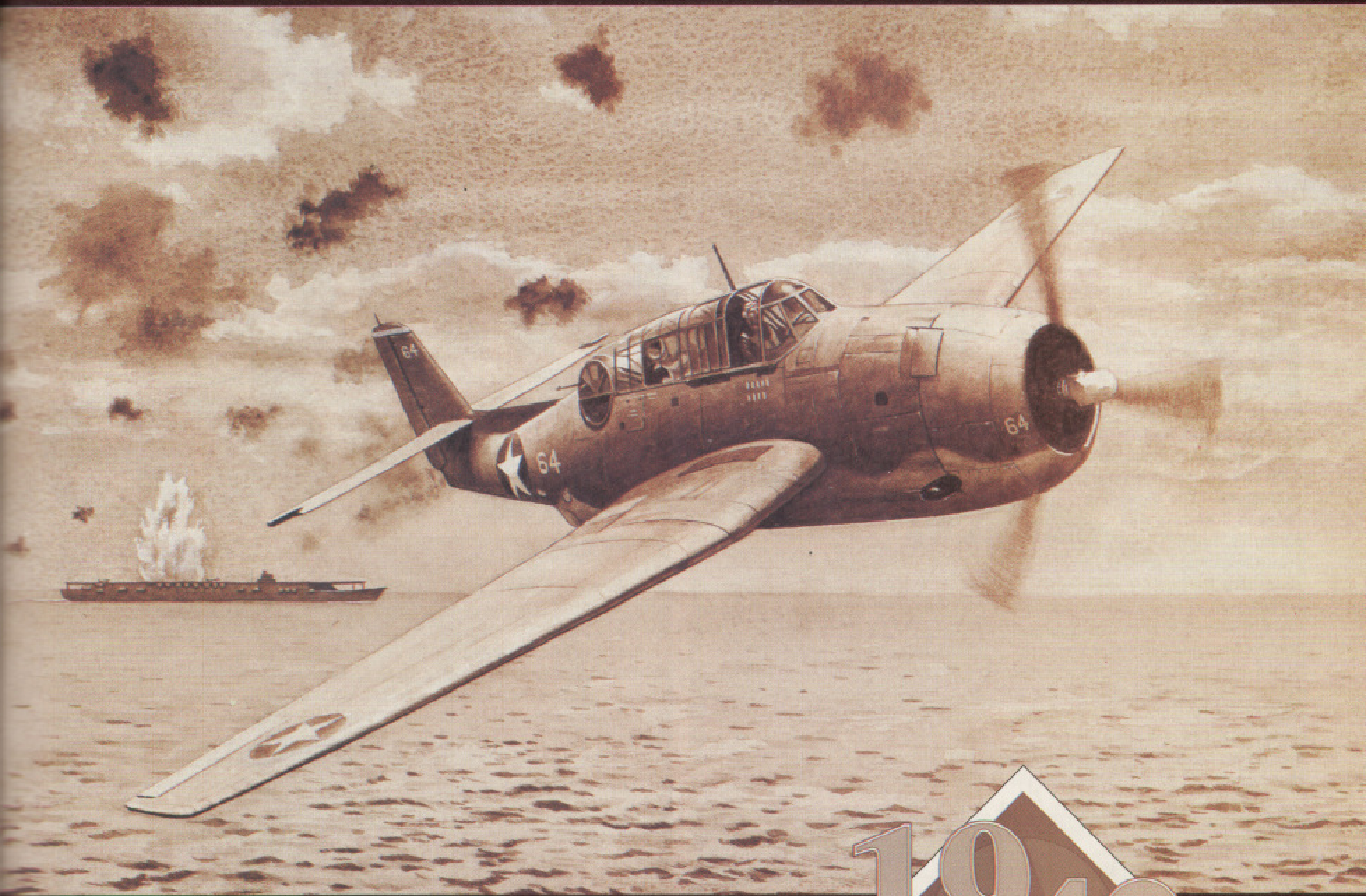
- Any thunder it might've had has been stolen by the far superior Doom.
- The aliens are the most hilariously crap things you've ever seen.
- With its slow pace it all gets rather dull rather quickly.

OVERALL

50%

In 1942, in the South Pacific
only the bravest and the best flyers
became carrier aircrew.

JOIN THEM

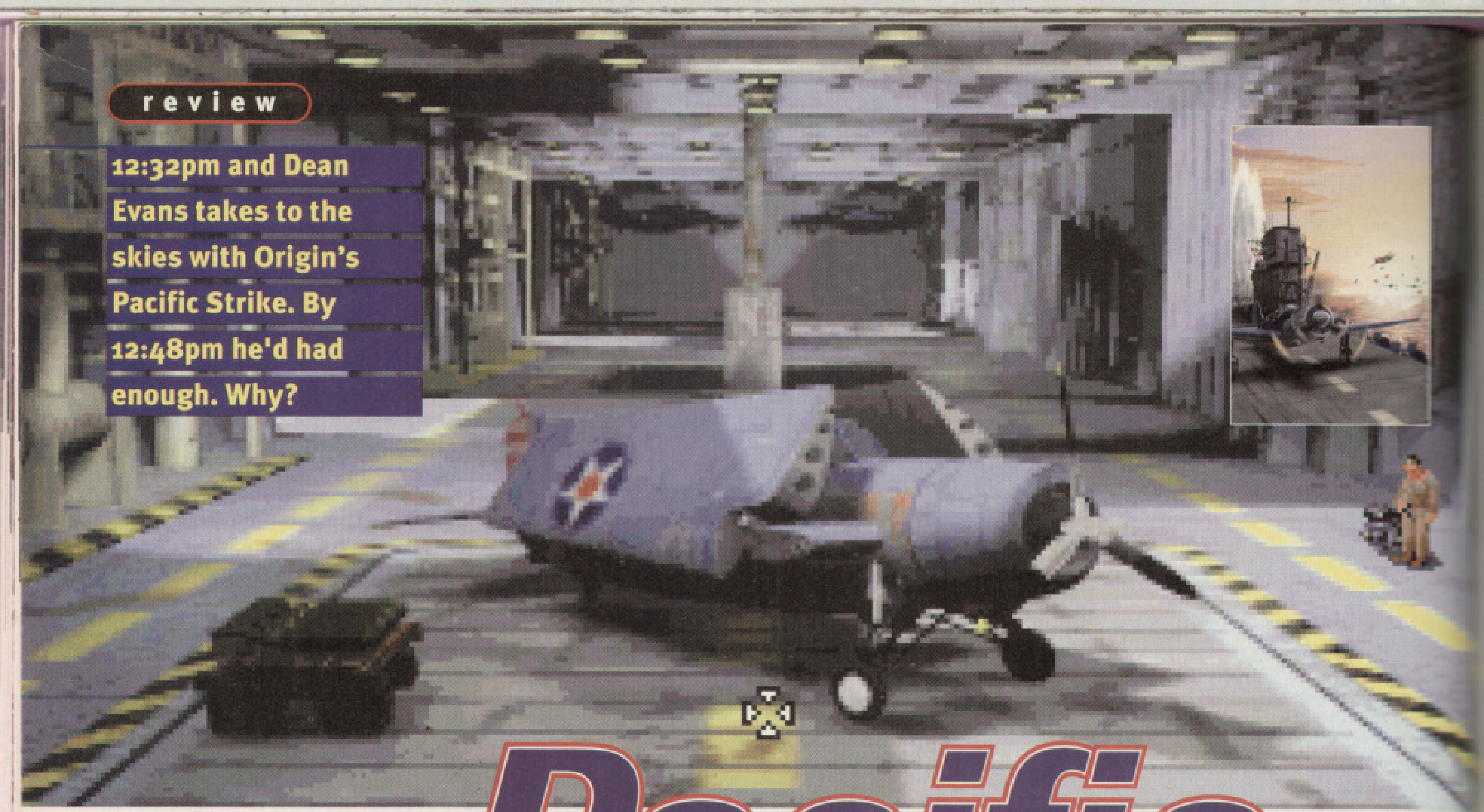


1942

THE PACIFIC AIR WAR

FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES

MICROPROSE



12:32pm and Dean Evans takes to the skies with Origin's Pacific Strike. By 12:48pm he'd had enough. Why?

Pacific Strike

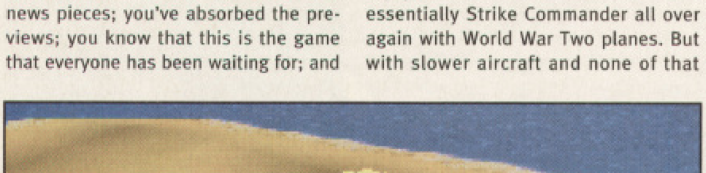
December 7th, 1941. "I never knew we had so many planes," burbles Jester as the blue skies above Pearl Harbour fill with the sound of aircraft and explosions. "You mumbling Jackass," shouts our muscular, square-jawed hero, "this is no drill... the Japs are attacking!"

Yes, with a suitably lavish cinematic intro, digitised speech and Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped aircraft, Pacific Strike, the latest game from Origin Systems, lurches onto your PC screen with a dramatic fanfare. You've read the news pieces; you've absorbed the previews; you know that this is the game that everyone has been waiting for; and here at PC GAMES we all trembled with excitement as the disks were hand-delivered to the office on an Electronic Arts velvet cushion.

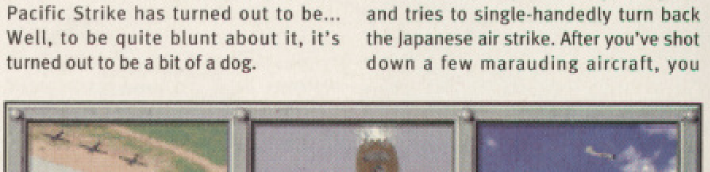
Of course, if you've been soaking up the hype like a Kleenex on a damp worktop you'll know that Pacific Strike is essentially Strike Commander all over again with World War Two planes. But with slower aircraft and none of that guided missile gubbins, it promised to ooze playability from every nook, cranny and rivet-hole.

But I'm afraid 'promised' is the key word to latch onto here, because for all it's much vaunted 'Realspace' graphics, playability and involving storyline, Pacific Strike has turned out to be... Well, to be quite blunt about it, it's turned out to be a bit of a dog.

As you may or may not be aware, Pacific Strike is the follow-up to Strike Commander and uses similar 3D technology, but is set in 1941 after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. You play a heroic US Navy pilot who foolishly leaps into a spare fighter and tries to single-handedly turn back the Japanese air strike. After you've shot down a few marauding aircraft, you

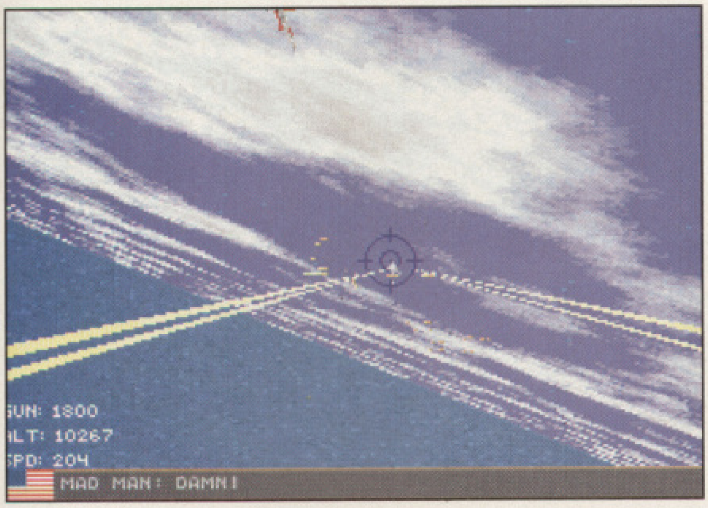


Like any good flight sim, Pacific Strike features a rotatable external view. I'd love to say that the Gouraud shaded and texture-mapped planes look brilliant — but they don't, so I can't.



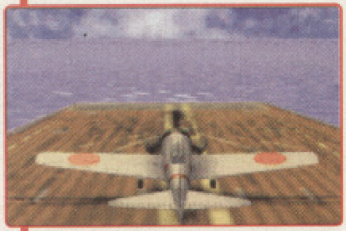
The Instant Action option offers you the chance to bypass the narrative bit and jump straight into some frantic combat. There's no messing about. Land, sea, air, you can take them all on.

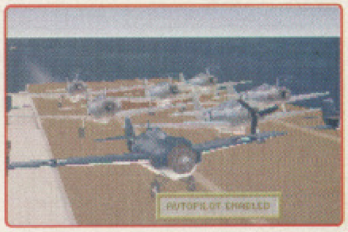
(Below) Can you work out what's happening here? Nope, I can't either — and I took the bloody thing. Er, I'm in a dogfight with that Jap Zero that you can't quite see in the middle and I'm being shot at by another. This happens alot I'm afraid. Welcome to Pacific Strike...



IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Well obviously Pacific Strike is a bit like Strike Commander and when Wings of Glory appears (Origin's First World War flight sim) it will be a bit like that too. But if you're a mere mortal and you haven't got a top-notch, hot-damn, all-singing, all-dancing PC you may be better off waiting for MicroProse's superb 1942: Pacific Air War. It's faster, it looks nicer and you can move your ships around as well. Absolutely marvellous.


PACIFIC STRIKE



1942: PACIFIC AIR WAR

land, get a big pat on the back and are immediately shipped out to join the top gun pilots on the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise.

Once you make it onto the carrier, the plot really livens up and, with a combination of high resolution cutscenes and those famous Origin talky bits, Pacific Strike lets you take part in every major battle of the Pacific war.

Like Strike Commander and Wing Commander before it, the evolving narrative is shaped by your actions, and the campaign is won or lost according to your skill and daring in air combat. For example if you fly Mission A against a Japanese carrier and fail to sink it, it will still be there (with its complement of aircraft) come Mission B and Mission C.

Obviously I don't need to tell you that an extra carrier hanging about could radically alter the course of the war and even dramatically affect your chances of winning it. Pacific Strike ain't easy, boy...

As you can see, life is far from dull when you're a US Navy pilot and, apart from your natty beige suit and smart, peaked cap, one of the big advantages Pacific Strike has over Strike Commander is the huge variety of aircraft that you can fly.

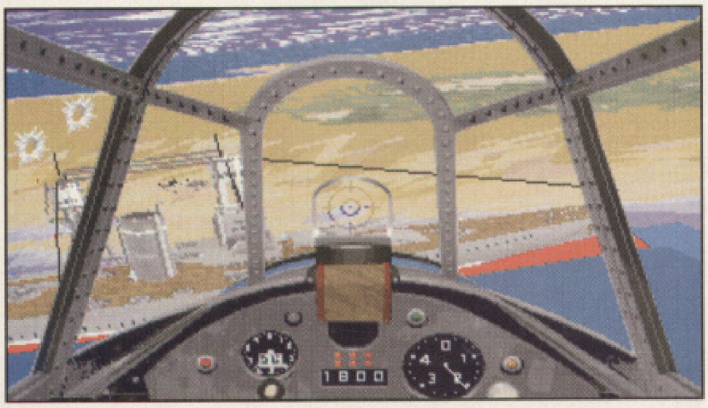
All of the planes have been realistically modelled, and as the story progresses you can take to the skies in a Wildcat, a Dauntless torpedo bomber, an Avenger and various others. Pacific Strike also has the nifty virtual cockpit view (first used in Strike Commander), allowing you to pan easily around the cockpit and scan the horizon for enemy fighters.

There's also the obligatory external view, a weapons' view that allows you to follow the bombs as they sail gracefully earthwards, and the all-important victim view which shows you a view of your target so you can gloat and chuckle excitedly when Zeros crash and explode.

Of course, all the aircraft are rendered in fully Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped 3D — but you can no doubt see that for yourself from the screenshots. Hey, are the planes a bit blocky or is it just me that thinks they look *horrible*?

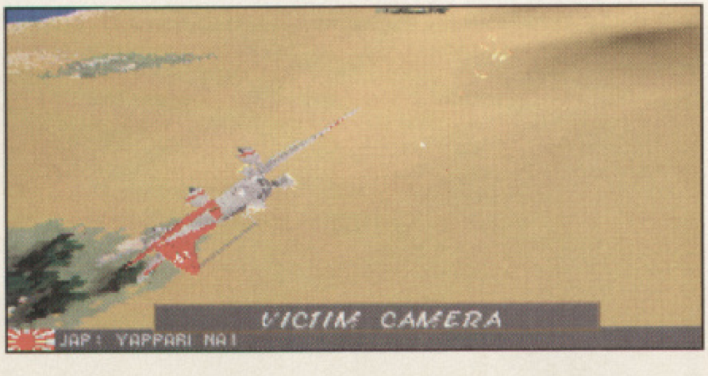
Anyway, once you're up in the air, twisting, turning and stalling, the gameplay itself is actually quite simple. More 'flight game' than true blue 'flight sim' (thanks to those talky bits — let's give them a big cheer), the missions usually progress something like this:

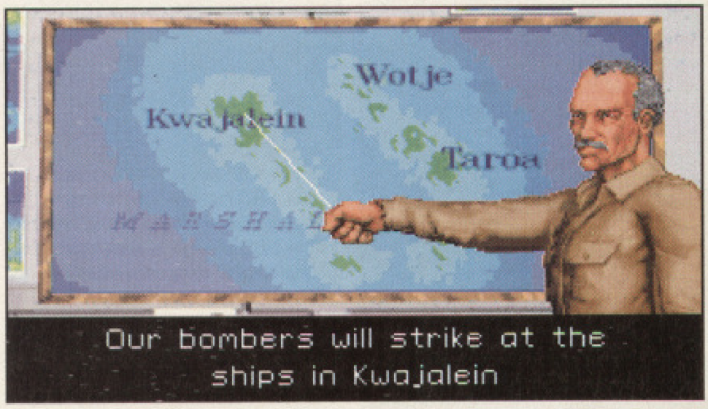
First kick in the autopilot function by



(Above) Diving down on an enemy ship can get quite exciting. Shame it's one of mine...

(Below) The victim view kicks in when you score an air victory. Bye-bye Jap plane, bye-bye.

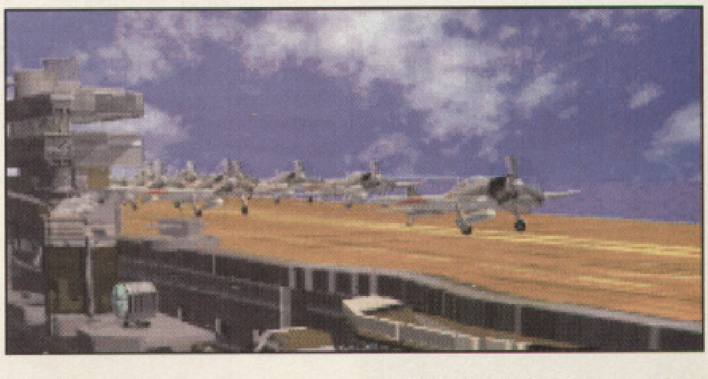


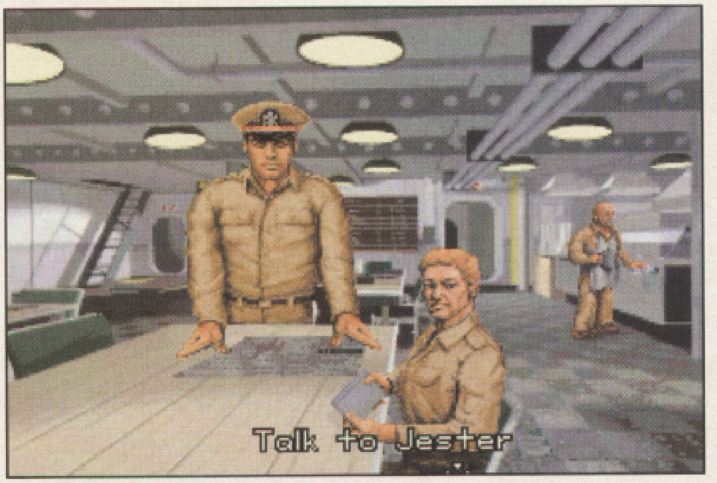


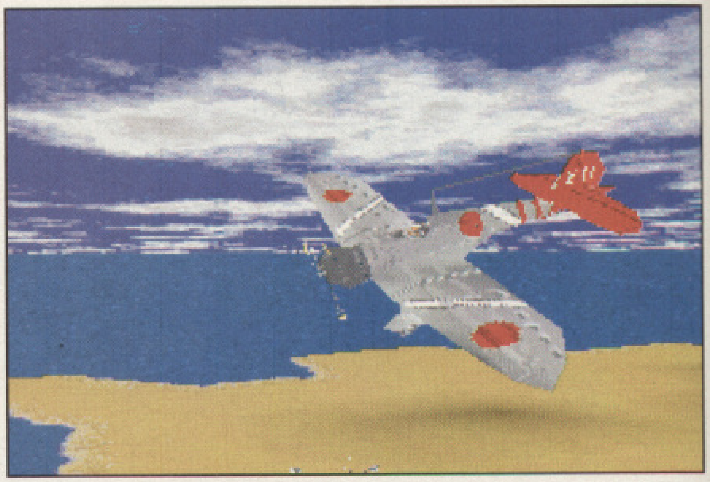
Our bombers will strike at the ships in Kwajalein

(Above) Your briefing officer looks a bit like Sean Connery, though sadly not in this picture.

(Below) The lavish intro sequence shows the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. The swines.







PENTIUM POWER!

Cue dramatic music, cue 'Loading terrain' screen and cue Pentium processing power... I said, cue Pentium processing power. Cue Pentium!!! Cut, cut, cut.

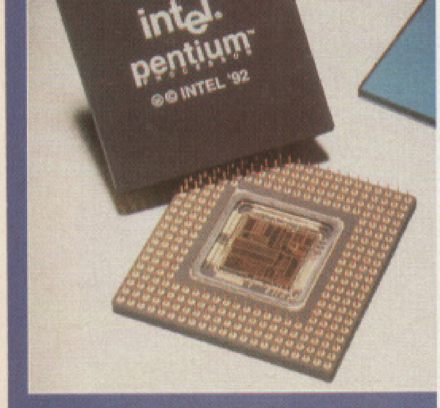
Okay, where the hell is the Pentium? Has anybody seen the Pentium? Anybody? Hey, you, yeah you, go check it's trailer. We can't do this game without the Pentium...

Now I'm not going to go on about it, but if you've bought an EA game in the last six months you'll have noticed the odd Intel advert or seven plastered over a freebie poster; you may even have seen the clever 'Intel Inside' TV ads.

Intel are heavily pushing their DX2, DX4 and Pentium processors, hoping that by the end of the year the DX2, a 66MHz 486-based machine, will be the entry-level machine chip.

The little chip pictured below, however, is what all the fuss is about. The brand-spanking new Pentium processor — the 586, if you like. If you've got one of these babies inside your PC your Origin games will run smoother than a pint of Angel Delight being poured from a jug.

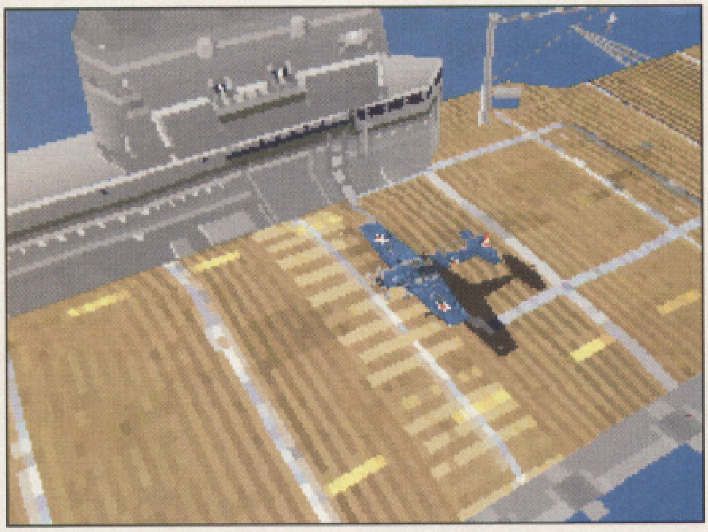
The only problem with all this is that a Pentium PC will cost you about £2,000. The price will come down, of course, but not for a good six to eight months. And who'll want to play Pacific Strike by then?



(Above left) Once you make it past the first mission you get posted to the USS Enterprise where you'll spend the rest of the game. It's populated by an assortment of cheerful people including your pal Jester, Captain Biggs and good old Cookie who's the, er, cook.

(Above right) Not content with an external view of your plane? Why not view everybody elses?

(Below) My nippy little Wildcat fighter takes off from the deck of the Enterprise.



pressing the 'A' key, press 'A' again to zoom to the action, destroy enemy planes and/or bomb specified targets, press 'A' again to zoom back, dogfight a few more enthusiastic Japs and then return home to the carrier. Succeed and you can move onto the next mission, fail and your shipmates will wrap you tightly in the American flag, whistle one of those high-pitched ship's whistles and tip your corpse solemnly into the deep blue sea.

Fly like a demon and successfully complete enough missions and your bravery will be rewarded with two promotions. The first promotion, to Lieutenant (and that's Loo-tenant in the US Navy, remember), allows you to select your own plane while the second promotion, to Lieutenant Commander, enables you to construct your own missions with the built-in mission editor. Here the top brass tell you what to attack and you then plan the mission specifying everything from plane types and numbers right down to the colour of your pilot's boxer shorts.

If you don't or can't persevere this far, the Instant Action option allows you to do exactly the same thing independently of the central narrative. So if you have an overwhelming urge to risk life and limb trying to torpedo a Japanese aircraft carrier, you can create a mission that allows you to do just that.

With a pounding stereo soundtrack and textured sky, land and sea, Origin should have been onto a winner with Pacific Strike. But — and this is a big, 24-point, sans serif sort of 'but' — they aren't. You've sneaked a look at the mark, so you know it's only got 60%.

Why? Well, in my opinion Pacific Strike is a slow, ugly-looking and frustrating World War Two flight game and I don't care who knows it. Anyone who gives this game a high mark is completely and utterly deranged. In a huge, huge way. Unless they've got a Pentium machine, of course; then it might be alright. But hands up who's got one of those? One, two... er, any advance on two?

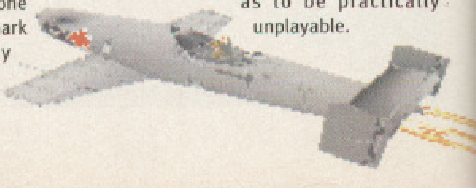
The biggest problem with Pacific Strike is its speed. It's not only damned slow, it's sluggish and downright lethargic. When I loaded up Pacific Strike I would never have guessed that three minutes later I'd be fiddling with my machine's turbo button wondering whether I'd inadvertently switched it off.

It's a shame. The nicely drawn cinematic intro ran extremely smoothly, but as soon as you've chosen your options and kick-started the game proper, Pacific Strike runs as fast as a tortoise strapped to an anvil — even on a fast 486 machine. Ideally Pacific Strike should play like a movie, but if you've got a 486 that's got less than 66MHz worth of oomph, Pacific Strike is like flicking through a book and just seeing every other page.

So if the speed is this bad the main culprit must be the processor hungry graphics. Obviously on full detail everything is Gouraud shaded and texture-mapped, and I really wouldn't mind so much if the aircraft looked super sexy but they don't.

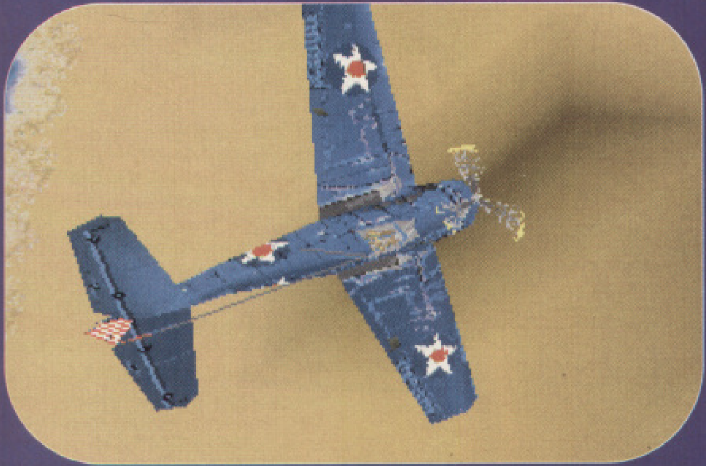
Pacific Strike suffers the same visual problems as Strike Commander did, namely that the aircraft are blocky, indistinct and often badly drawn. And it's not just the planes either; the clouds in the sky are blocky and the sea is huge mass of ugly pixels. If TFX looks a million dollars, Pacific Strike looks about ú2.50. Just take a look at some of the screenshots in this review — they're hardly inspiring are they?

"So why don't you just turn some of the detail down?" you might be saying. Well yes, fair point, but I tried it and I'm sorry to say that even if you turn the majority of the options off — and that means the object textures, object shading, object detail, the sky and water textures and the sound — it's still so slow as to be practically unplayable.

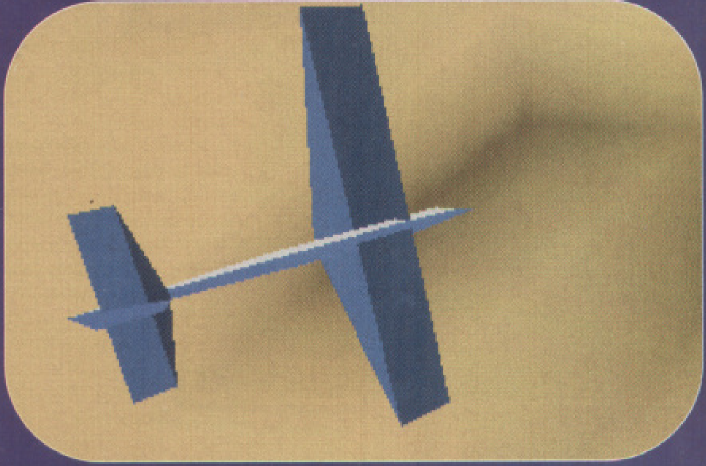


TAKING DOWN DETAILS

Of course, if — like 95% of the PC owning population — you're not blessed with the gift of leviathan processing power, Pacific Strike has a wealth, in fact a positive plethora, of options that you can turn off to speed things up. The example featured below shows the lengths you might have to go to in order to get a smooth game on a 486.



With everything turned on a US Navy Wildcat looks like this. Gouraud shaded, texture-mapped, lots of detail. It's a bit on the blocky side but if the game moved at a decent speed you could probably ignore that.



Turn everything off and it looks like this. This is the bare minimum. The ground is plain yellow, the sea plain blue and your Wildcat... Well, it's like a paper aeroplane or one of those balsa wood gliders you can buy in a toy shop. Hmmmm.

Pacific Strike is nothing without its Gouraud shaded bits — turn them all off and you're left with little more than a poor Aces Of The Pacific clone with some cinematic bits and better sound. In fact, you might as well buy Aces — it's a hell of a lot cheaper for a start.

But why so bad? It uses the same technology as Strike Commander, what's the big problem? Well, in Strike the ground wasn't really an integral part of the game; occasionally you strafed it but most of the time it was just there to be landed on. If I'm perfectly honest when you were screaming along at Mach 2 in a fighter jet, you didn't really have time to notice how bad the actual detail was.

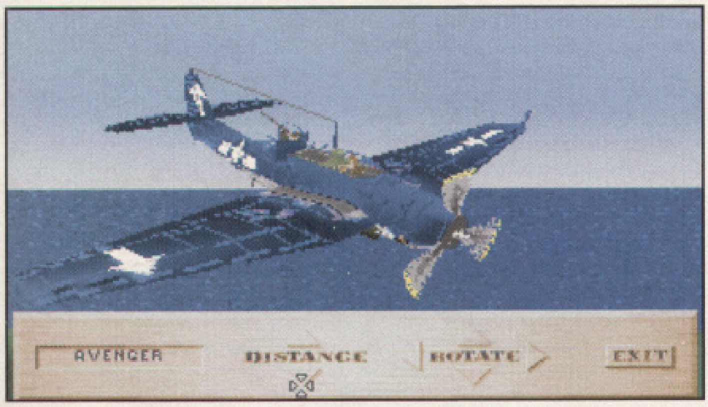
In Pacific Strike, however, the gameplay is a lot more sedate and you find that you've suddenly got plenty of time on your hands to look around and take in the scenery. But don't bother — it's blocky, unrealistic and crap.

Like Origin's other new release Ultima VIII, the hard disk accessing is painfully slow, especially when the game has to access the sound files. What this means is that you can be dogfighting a Kate (and that's Kat-ay) over the Eastern Solomans, and every time you score a hit the game will pause for a second and then shudder a bit as it plays the bangs, clunks and kabooms.

All in all, I didn't have any fun playing Pacific Strike. None whatsoever. Zip, nil, zero, nada. I'm sure if I stuck at it, persevered a bit longer and some kind soul bought me a shiny new 100MHz Pentium PC then I might just get to like it. But then again, pigs might fly, hell might freeze over and my bet that Manchester United won't win anything this year might just come true.

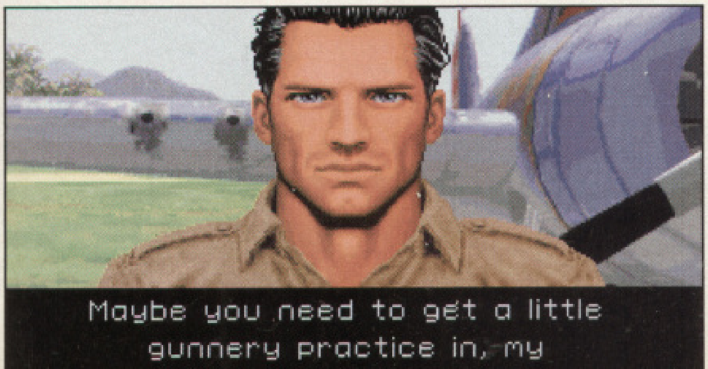
Simply put, if you've got a DX2, a DX4 or a Pentium by all means go and spend your money on Pacific Strike (and don't forget the speech pack, a snip at only £19.99) — you probably won't be disappointed. But if you've got anything less than a 66MHz PC — and at last count that includes a fair few of us — then don't bother. Don't touch Pacific Strike with a barge pole. It's too slow, too ugly and no fun at all.

Hopefully Origin will one day — and let's hope it's soon — wake up to the fact that not everybody has a spare £2,000 just lying around to invest in a cheetah-speed PC. What's the point in developing games for technology that nobody has? You answer me that one...



(Above) The Object Viewer allows you to take a peek at all the objects in the game including the aircraft, ships, buildings and even a life-raft.

(Below) He's square-jawed, he's ruggedly handsome, he can only be the hero. And he is.



Maybe you need to get a little
gunnery practice in, my

PACIFIC STRIKE

ELECTRONIC ARTS/ORIGIN

(0753) 549442

£44.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

66MHz 486, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 20Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards

*THE **GOOD...***

- Er, the music on the object viewer screen is great and... hey, can I get back to you on this one?

*...AND THE **BAD***

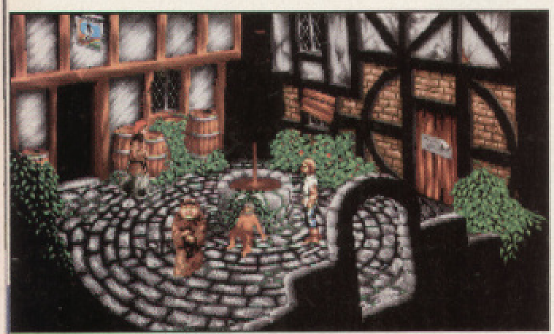
- It's way too slow — you've got to have a DX2, DX4 or a Pentium powered PC to run it smoothly.
- The graphics, though Gouraud shaded, texture-mapped and light-sourced, are blocky, ugly and horrible.
- A huge leap backwards from the great game that is Strike Commander.

OVERALL

60%

Budget Reviews

Old games don't die - they just get repackaged and rereleased at a budget price. And here's where you'll find out all about them.



Lure Of The Temptress

Hurr-hurr! Lure Of The Temptress, eh? Sounds a bit, you know, saucy.

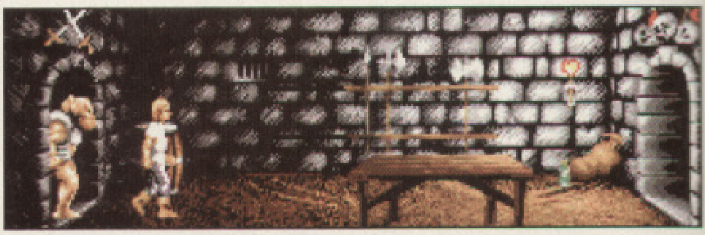
Yeah, well it might sound it, but you'll find more sex on Rainbow than you will here. Instead you get a graphic adventure that was innovative when first released and does more than enough to hold its own now. It's set in the usual derivative fantasy world of orcs, goblins and women who don't wear much.

The Temptress of the title is the evil witch Selena, who's killed the king and banged you up in the dungeons in case you get any funny ideas about deposing her. Needless to say, you do get some funny ideas, and a few of them are about giving her a jolly good hiding.

Like the plot, the game itself is very much in traditional mould, with you encountering all manner of fantasy beasties and sword-wielding nutters while solving the various problems which crop up. One of the core elements of the gameplay is the computer-controlled characters' independence. They'll quite happily wander around getting on with their lives while you occasionally pop up and ask a few questions.

This is where things become difficult. Because nobody's that concerned with what you're up to, they don't hang around waiting for you to talk to them. Instead you've got to track them down to interrogate them. While it's nice having quasi-realistic characters, it can be a bit frustrating when you're brought back from the brink of a major puzzle breakthrough because some git's sodded off to the bogs.

All this is presented with some rather tasty background and character graphics, which are comparable to many, more recent games. The control system employed is the Sierra-pioneered point-'n'-click type with the addition of pop-up menus. The commands are of the basic pick-up, drop and use variety, which is just enough to get you through the puzzle.



And it's the puzzles themselves which supply much of the game's attraction. They're taxing, bordering on frustrating, but never to the point where you're smashing your keyboard in.

Lure looks nice, plays well and is a generally enjoyable game. However, when you compare it to more recent games such as Day Of The Tentacle and Monkey Island 2, it's short on style and ultimately not as playable. Still, it's cheap and you won't complete it quickly, which is as good a reason as any to give it a whirl.

THE HIT SQUAD/VIRGIN

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

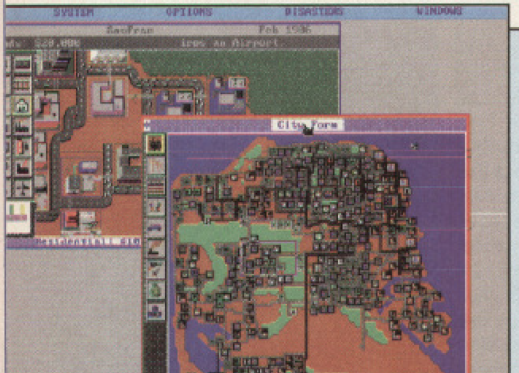
20MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland sound-cards.

OVERALL

85%



Sim City Classic

While we spend our evenings unleashing monsters and firestorms on our 256-colour Sim City 2000 Metropolis', we should spare a thought for this, the great grandaddy of the Sim series.

Compared to the gobsmacking SC2000, the original Sim City looks like it could be dated around the Mesozoic period. Play it, however, and you soon realise just how much of a landmark title this really was. It really is one of the most important computer games of recent years.

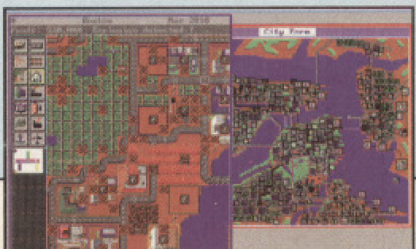
As with its sequel, all Sim City asks of you is to build a city, make a bit of cash and, if you're feeling particularly malicious, demolish it with an earthquake or something equally as deadly. And that's the format. No real end, no lives, no score. Just an open-ended game you can come back time and time again.

In a nut-shell it's up to you to designate which parts of a barren landscape should house the industry, commercial and residential zones of your potentially thriving society. Supply the power, chuck in a few roads and keep your fingers crossed. Although the professionals prefer to plan things first...

From the moment you zone your first area you'll be hooked. This is every bit as addictive now as it was when it first appeared. The biggest attraction has to be that there's no overall objective. You can make your city as large or as small as you want. As long as it generates enough capital to pay for public services, it'll keep ticking over until you feel like making changes.

If you fancy something more challenging, there are a number of scenarios which tax your mayoral skills to the full. You can take on the task of replacing Hamburg's roads with a monorail, or clearing up Boston after a nuclear meltdown. I know it doesn't sound as gripping as, say, taking on the forces of ultimate evil with a small paring knife, but in practice you'll find yourself sticking to it until the job's done.

This is nowhere near as in-depth as its sequel, which makes it a perfect trainer for anyone struggling to get to grips with its big brother. Me? I'm off to trash New York...



KIXX XL/MAXIS

(021) 625 3388

£16.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

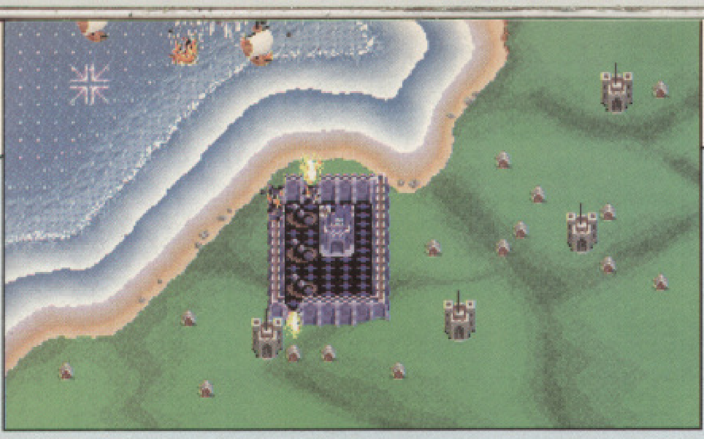
16MHz 386, VGA, 580K, 4Mb RAM and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland sound-cards

OVERALL

88%



Rampart

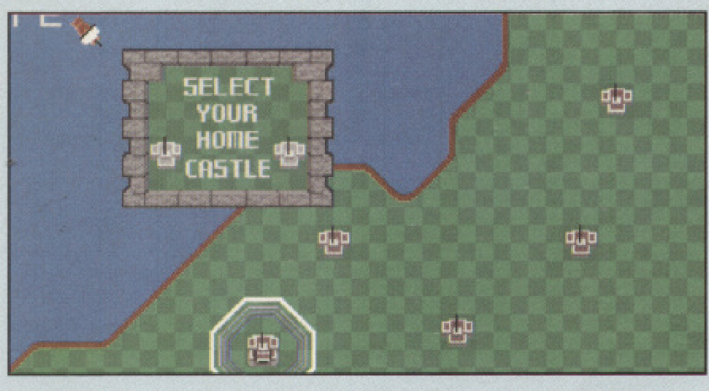
While it achieved quite a degree of success on the consoles, Rampart has to go down as one of the most underrated PC games ever. Looking at the graphics it's easy to see why most people passed it over.

It's a simple game of mediaeval castle building and cannon firing. You've got to build the walls for your castle from a series of random pieces before a timer runs down. If you don't manage to completely enclose any land it's game over and you should slap yourself for being crap at games.

This alone is enough to rattle the nerves of all but the most experienced Tetris players, but the fun really starts in the next section. Depending on how large your castle is, you're allocated a number of cannons, which you can then use to pound the other player's castle into rubble.

Rampart's strength comes from its two-player head-to-head mode. Beating the computer never carries the same in-your-face kudos as rubbing in a particularly gruesome defeat against a now-silent human opponent. As a one-player game, well, shouting at your PC doesn't have quite the same effect and to be honest, it's just plain boring after half an hour or so.

Looking back, Rampart couldn't justify itself as a full-price release, but at this price it's the perfect way to escape from flight-sims with phonebook-sized manuals. You don't have to be good at arcade games to be good at this, just have a strong nerve and the ability to cope when the computer throws loads of useless pieces at you during the building phase. Excellently simple and simply excellent.



SELECT YOUR HOME CASTLE

THE HIT SQUAD/DOMARK

(061) 832 6633

£12.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

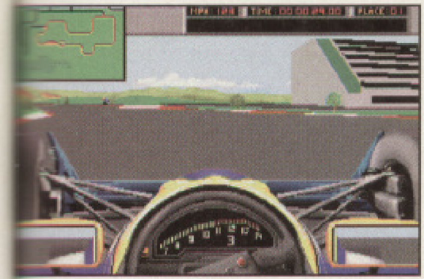
25MHz 386, EGA/VGA, 580K, 4Mb RAM and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster soundcard; joystick.

OVERALL

81%



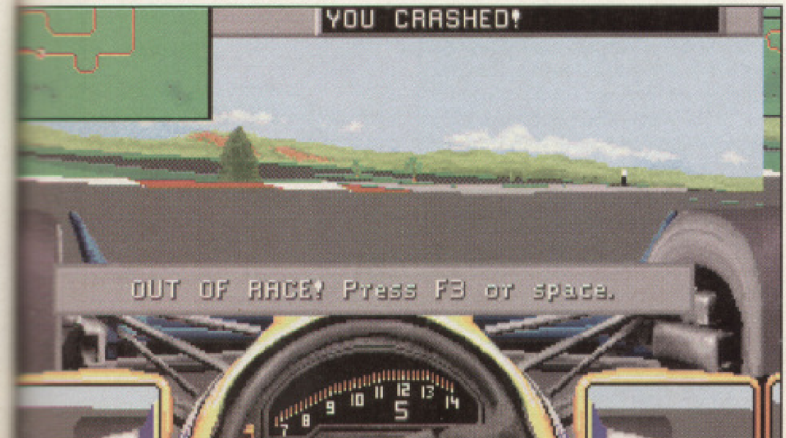
Grand Prix Unlimited

The only thing that can beat a good driving game is an even better driving game. In this case what we have is the best Formula One sim on budget and an aching brain deciding whether it's better to buy this or save our pennies for IndyCar.

GPU does come with plenty of features. There are loads of tracks to race on, single or World championship game options, different teams to race for and, of course, plenty of fast cars.

All things aren't equal though. These cars are nice and fast on my DX2, but put them on a 386 and things slow down considerably. There doesn't seem to be much of a reason for this; the few background objects leap out at you only when you get close to them, so there's no tieing up processing power by scaling them from a distance.

In fact, while this problem isn't massive it should make you think twice about buying this game. On a fast machine you're in with a real challenge - the car takes a lot of skill to handle and the corners leap out at you. Play on something slower and it's a bit like an old granny in her Lada out to keep her no-claims bonus.

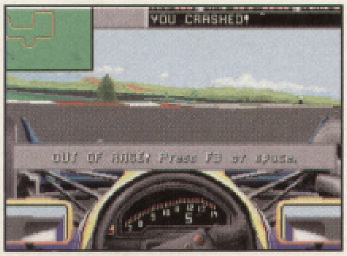


YOU CRASHED!

OUT OF RACE! Press F3 or space.

This problem is off-set by the amount of actual driving you have to do. There are loads of tracks, including several which don't belong to the usual Grand Prix circuit. The other drivers have scant regard for road safety and drive like London cabbies in rush hour. Expect a few dents.

If you're really serious about your driving games you're probably better off with a decent and recent full-price drive. Otherwise this will while away a few hours as you wait for the late night IndyCar racing coverage on ITV.



YOU CRASHED!

OUT OF RACE! Press F3 or space.

THE HIT SQUAD/ACCOLADE

(061) 832 633

£11.99 OUT NOW

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

33MHz 386, VGA, 580K, 4Mb RAM and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; joystick.

OVERALL

79%

Heroes Of The 357th

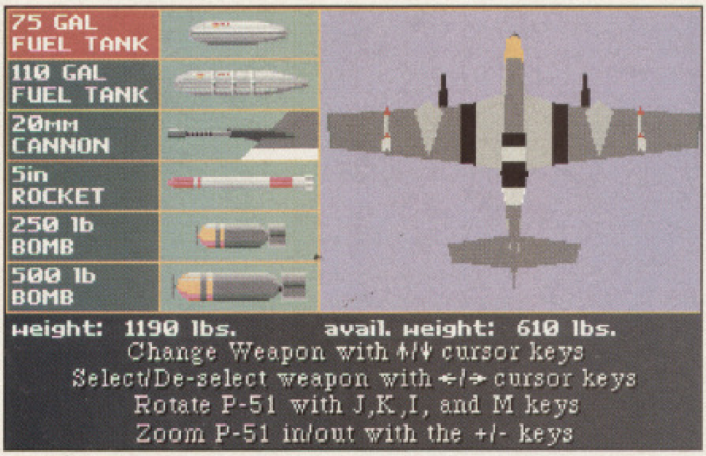
This is how flying should be. None of this poncy radar rubbish or nancy long-range missile combat. This is seat-of-your-pants flying mate - just you, them and a couple of big machine guns.

It's set in the Second World War, with you at the controls of an American P-51 fighter taking on the Luftwaffe. As this is 50 years ago things are pretty low-tech. You altimeter and unguided rockets are about as state-of-the-art as things get. The same can't be said for the game, though. It features practically everything you can think of; cut-scenes crop up when you launch missiles or Fritz plugs your crate full .50 bullets, there are combat replays and the presentation is excellent throughout.

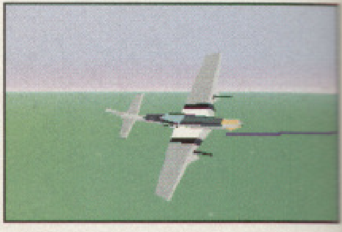
You're not limited to merely aerial combat. There are loads of ground targets begging to be bombed and shot. These kinds of missions can be very difficult indeed, especially as you normally have to contend with enemy planes on the way to and from your target.

There's a namby-pamby practice mode where novice pilots can earn their wings. But that's the easy way. Real fighter-jocks should take to the skies straight away. At least that's the theory. Before you hit the runway you've got to load your plane up with enough fuel and ammo to ensure you can complete your mission. There's nothing too wrong with flying on fumes, but reaching your target and running out of bullets is most embarrassing.

This is a real bargain for the asking price. It's packed with missions, easy to get into and there's nothing too complicated to contend with once you're airborne. Best of all, you don't need some kind of hulking powered-up nightmare of a PC to run it on, and it'll work on most machines above a 386. An all-round good performer.


75 GAL FUEL TANK
110 GAL FUEL TANK
20MM CANNON
5in ROCKET
250 lb BOMB
500 lb BOMB
weight: 1190 lbs. avail. weight: 610 lbs.
Change Weapon with ↑/↓ cursor keys
Select/De-select weapon with ←/→ cursor keys
Rotate P-51 with J,K,I, and M keys
Zoom P-51 in/out with the +/- keys

'r' ends replay
F9 changes replay view



The Hit Squad/EA

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25Mhz 386, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 6Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; joystick.

OVERALL

87%

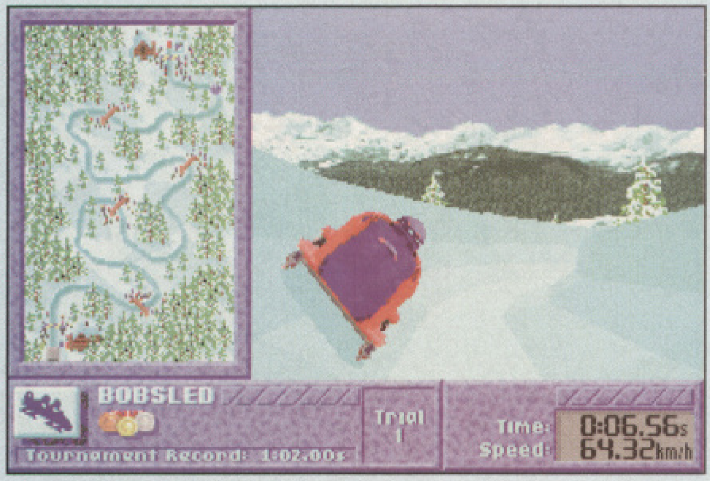
Winter Challenge

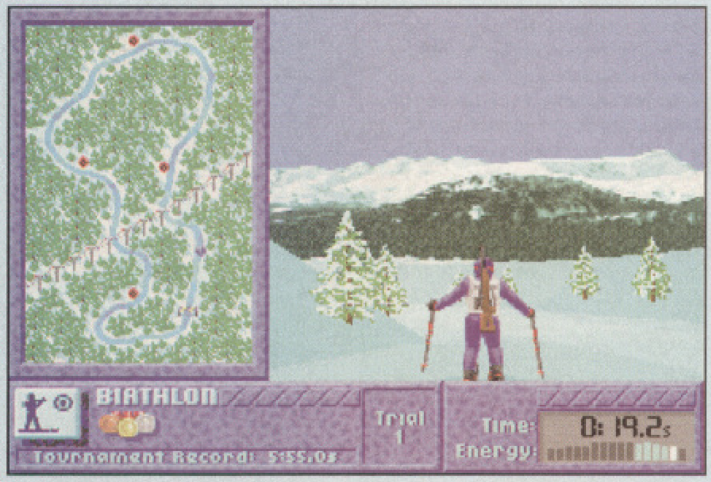
Considering how people keep going on about how crap and cold it is in Britain, we're not exactly what you'd call good at winter sports. Still, who needs to prove anything against the French and Austrians when you can demolish them in front of your PC.

Winter Challenge gives you the chance to test your mettle on the slopes, on ice and with a rifle in the biathlon. A variety of techniques as used to bring the action to life, all of which feature high-quality animation and sound.

There are eight events including speed skating, ski jump, bobsled and the nearly impossible slalom. Each requires a different set of tactics, but most demand plenty of joystick waggling to get your character moving at speed. All the events are first-person perspective, which means that a few look a bit similar, but it really makes no odds once you've given everything a whirl. If you're particularly impressed with your performance there's a video-style action-replay mode which lets you watch your performance. Useful for rubbing a victory in when you're up against human opponents.

This was one of the better PC sports sims when first released and it still holds its own today. It's much more fun than chucking ice at passers-by or attempting special snow-writing after a night on the booze.





The Hit Squad/Accolade

(061) 832 6633

£11.99 Out Now

RECOMMENDED **SPEC**

25Mhz 386, VGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM and 2Mb hard disk space.

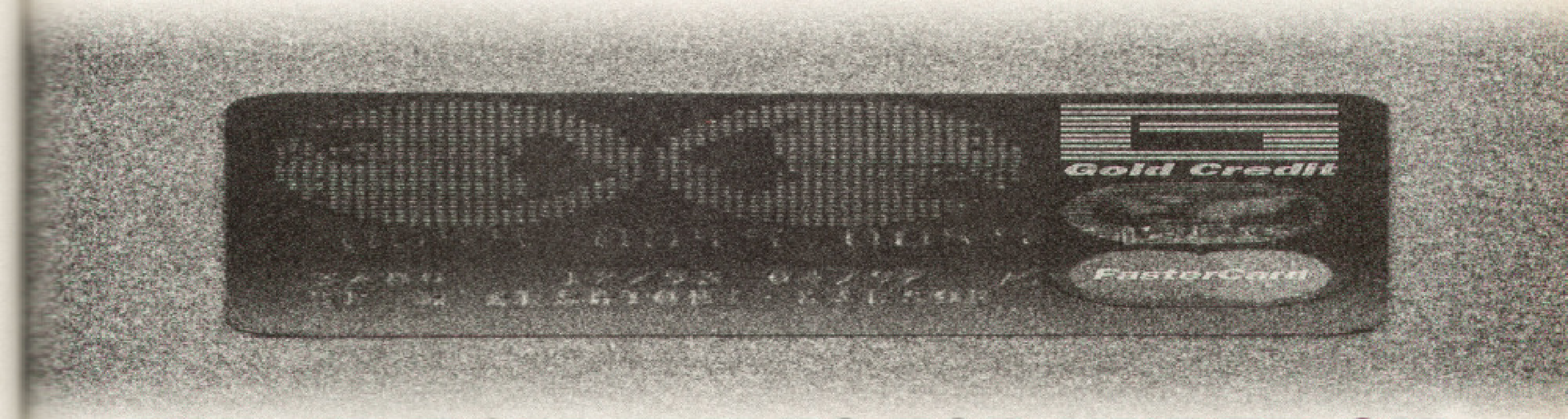
ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Adlin and Sound Blaster soundcards; joystick.

OVERALL

87%

A CD collection that won't stretch your plastic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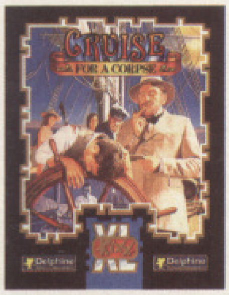
Eye of the Beholder


Cruise for a Corpse
Delphine
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Cruise for a Corpse

F-15 Strike Eagle II
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F-19
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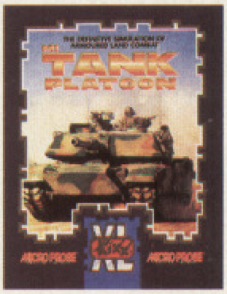
F-19 Stealth Fighter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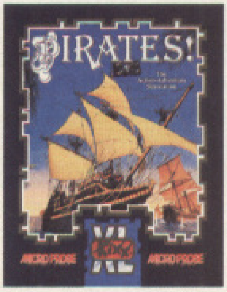
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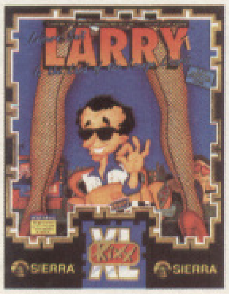
KIXX XL

Pirates!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SIERRA
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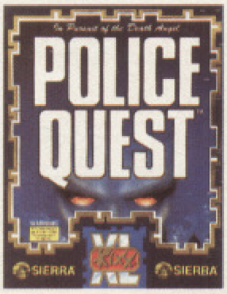
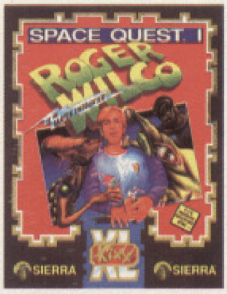
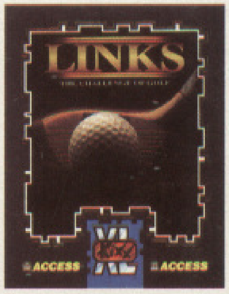
Leisure Suit Larry 1™


In Pursuit of the Death Angel
POLICE QUEST
SIERRA
KIXX XL

Police Quest™ 1


SPACE QUEST I
ROGER WILCO
SIERRA
KIXX XL

Space Quest® 1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Can't afford the latest £45 blockbuster? Why not get five or six top quality Shareware games instead?

Did you know that for slightly less than the cost of a Cadbury's Creme Egg and a double-pack of Marks & Spencers boxer shorts you can get any of the games featured on these pages? You didn't? Well, you ought to, because you'll find that the Shareware and Public Domain markets have a lot to offer.

So, £40 for one commercial game or £25 for five Shareware titles? Hmmmmm. How about...

Doom Update V1.2

Id Software

If you're a 'serious' gamesplayer you can't fail to have noticed the arrival of Id software's hugely addictive blood-fest, Doom. A slick, fast 3D shoot-'em-up (with a chainsaw), Doom has literally taken the country by storm and if you haven't done so already, you should ring up your friendly Shareware dealer and upgrade your original 1.1 game to a shiny new version 1.2.

In essence, Doom V1.2 is a patch disk which, when installed into your Doom directory, replaces and updates the original game files. Better still, Doom 1.2 introduces a new skill level called 'Nightmare'. Nightmare mode has even more monsters and guards to kill, and even when you've successfully cleared a room, if you wait around just a bit too long the room resets and replacement bad guys are teleported in. Nightmare is the ultimate challenge.

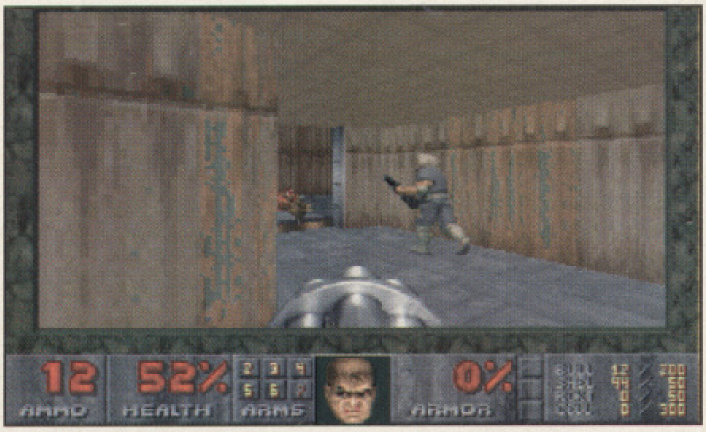
Doom 1.2 also has some highly improved communications software. In the original game up to four network users could play cooperatively or against each other in free-for-all 'Deathmatch' mode, but companies soon found that if you played Doom long enough the network couldn't cope and would splutter, keel over and wibble for days.

In 1.2 the networking software has been dramatically improved, but best of all if you haven't got access to a network (and most of us don't) Doom 1.2 also supports serial and modem links. Simply pop down to your local Tandy shop and buy a null-modem cable, tell a friend to cart a PC round and you can play multi-player Doom via a serial link.

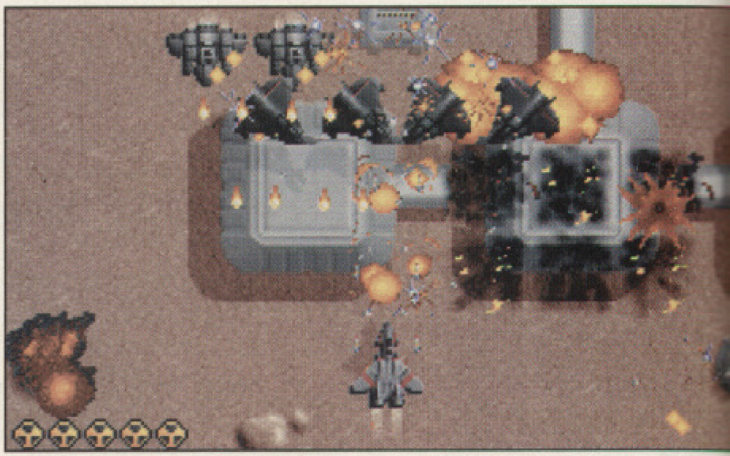
Believe me, there's nothing like the thrill of stalking a friend through dimly lit corridors and then charging at him with the chainsaw. Or a shotgun. Or a rocket launcher. Or just about any piece of death-dealing hardware, for that matter. Ah, the pure simplicity of it all. As Jay Wilbur, Id software's managing director put it,"if you haven't played multi-player Doom, you haven't played Doom."

Apparently Doom V 1.3 is also imminent and it will include bug fixes and the promise of true 3D sound support for the Gravis Ultrasound card. When we know, you'll know. And then, of course, there's Doom 2: Hell on Earth to look forward to. Oh, and what about Quake after that...?

(Above) If you haven't played Doom against a friend, you haven't played Doom at all.



In multi-player games of Doom your friends or Deathmatch enemies look like this guy above. If you manage to play on a network you can have another three colours to shoot. Lots of fun.



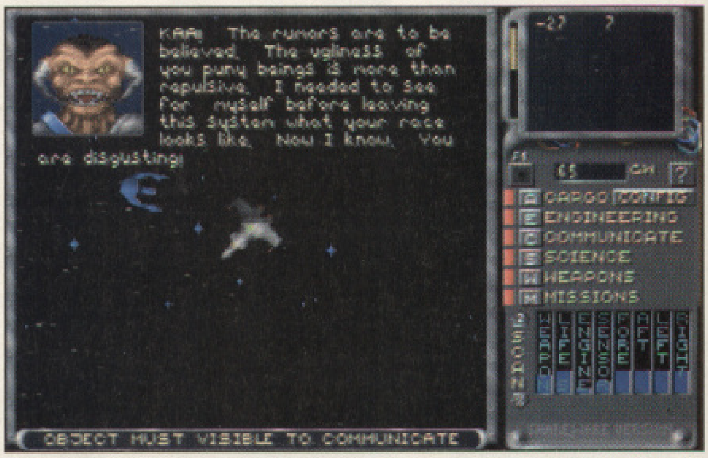
Fast-paced shoot-em up action in Apogee's new release Raptor.

Raptor

Apogee Software

Apogee has always had a reputation for producing quality Shareware games and its latest release Raptor: Call of the Shadows is no exception. Raptor is a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up where the aim is to shoot as many bad guys as you can, to collect the nifty bonus weapons and to defeat the awesome boss enemies at the end of each level.

Drawn in glorious 256-colour VGA graphics, Raptor is a highly addictive



KAA: The rumors are to be believed. The ugliness of you puny beings is more than repulsive. I needed to see for myself before leaving this system what your race looks like. Now I know. You are disgusting!

OBJECT MUST VISIBLE TO COMMUNICATE

Solar Winds, the new strategy space game from Epic Megagames. Not pretty but a challenge.

Where can I get this lovely Shareware?

If you'd like more information,

or you'd like to try out any of products mentioned above, here is a list of some of the friendly Shareware libraries that you can call. Ask them to send you a catalogue of their games.

Transend Services Ltd
(0274) 622228
Testware UK Ltd
(0423) 886415
Benetech Systems
(0553) 611231
PD Soft (0702) 466933
PS Selections (0474) 325802

Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games so try to shop around to find the best deal. You'll usually find that you'll pay by the disk, not by the game.

This means that if one disk costs £2 then a game like Raptor (which comes on three disks) will set you back £6. Postage and Packing is normally included and if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.

If you've got a modem, why not try giving the following BBS systems a call. Initial on-line time is free but for more access most systems will charge you an annual subscription fee.

After Hours BBS
(0785) 228214

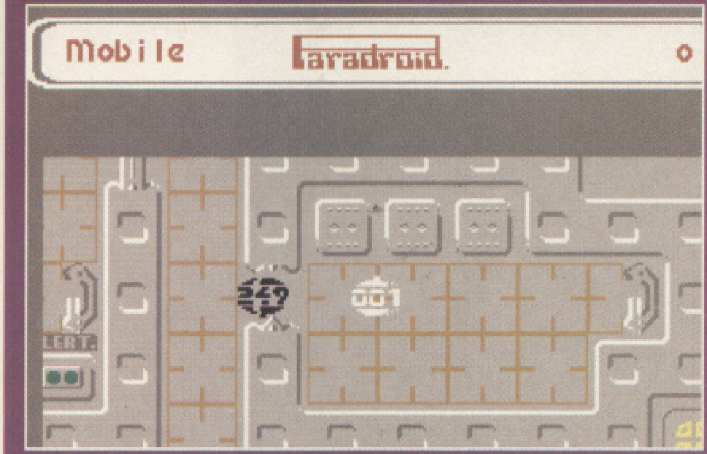
On-Line BBS
(0839) 661199/88/77

ZX Spectrum Emulator

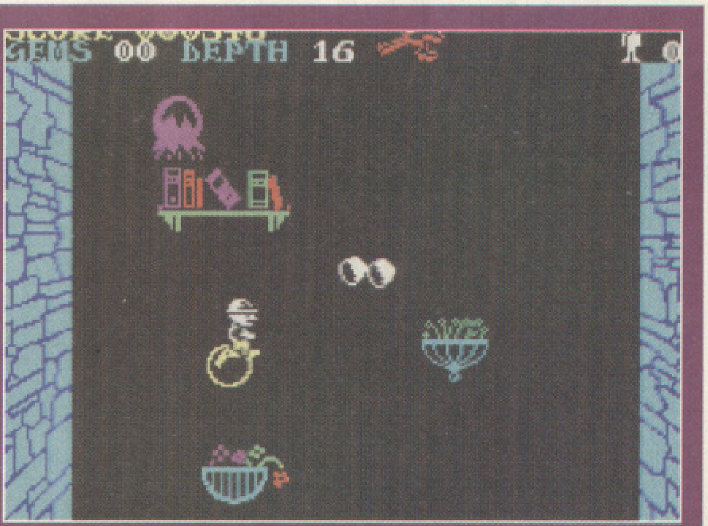
Remember the good old Spectrum, with it's rubber keys and tinny beeps? Well, if you've grown up with computers you probably have fond memories of Clive Sinclair's 48K baby and you might even go all misty-eyed if we were to mention games like Skooldaze, 3D Ant Attack or Atic Atac. (I do. — Ed.)

And now, thanks to the wonders of modern science, you can play all those old Spectrum games on your PC. With the ZX Spectrum emulator you can swoop over the hills in Penetrator, spray the bugs in Psssst! and screech over the desert in Trans-Am.

All you need to get at all this classic gameplay excellence is a reasonably quick 386 PC, 640K of memory and VGA graphics. There are currently over 700 converted Spectrum games hidden away in libraries and on bulletin boards so contact your library or hunt around a BBS for more information. It's worth the effort, if only for the nostalgia value alone.



Remember Paradroid? Bring back all those C64 memories with the C64 Shareware emulator.



Underwurlde from Ultimate is just one of 700 games compatible with the Spectrum emulator.

Commodore 64 Emulator

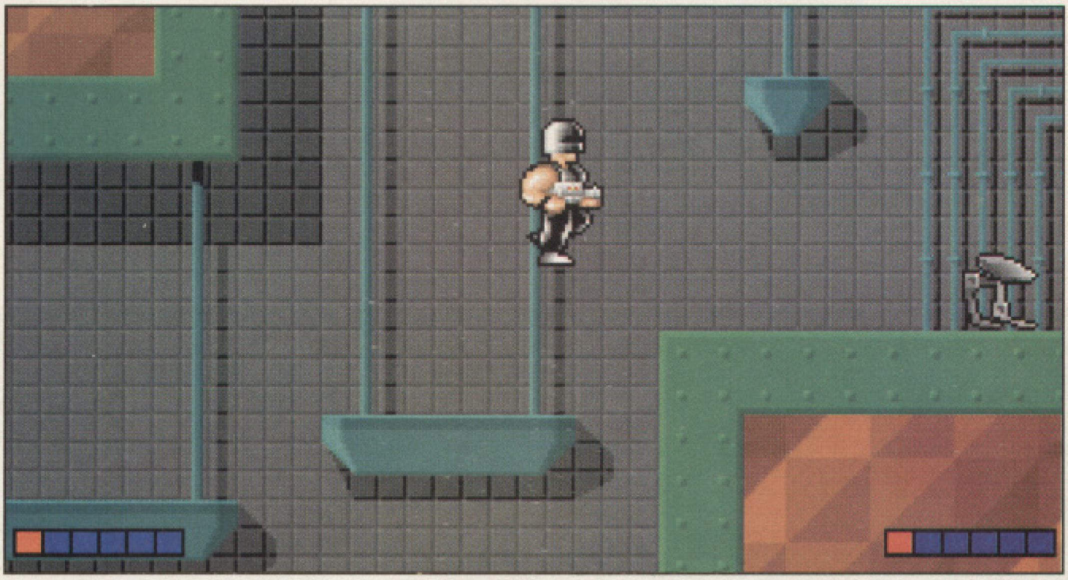
If being able to play Spectrum games wasn't brilliant enough for all us sad old computer types, with the aid of the C64 emulator you can now play stunning classics like Paradroid, Monty Mole, Commando and Boulderdash.

Yes, if you've got a 386 PC, 640K of memory and a quick VGA card, the C64 emulator reproduces a perfect Commodore 64 machine complete with analogue joystick support. If you've got a true Sound Blaster or a Gravis Ultrasound card you can also get perfect C64 sound, so if you used to be a big Commando fan you will be able to listen to that hugely addictive Rob Hubbard soundtrack. They don't make games like these any more...

As with the Spectrum emulator, you'll have to hunt around for the C64 emulator and the games, so contact a shareware library or your local BBS for more information.

game. As you progress through the levels, the ships become faster and meaner and the bosses become bigger and tougher to beat. Cash and weapons bonuses can also be collected on each level and if you make it past the big boss guardian at the end, you can return to the safety of your hangar and use your hard-earned cash to buy shields and bigger weapons — Dumb Fire missiles, mini-guns, air-to-ground missiles, smart bombs and so on.

Raptor is a refreshingly simple game and, although it's little more than a left, right and shoot affair, with its splendid graphics and gorgeous stereo soundtrack it's a game that will have you thoroughly absorbed for hours. Obviously it doesn't have a great depth of gameplay but it's the sort of game you can dip into whenever you want to. Great stuff.



He's big, he's chunky, he's ElectroMan. Run, jump and battle your way through an alien starbase thanks to Epic Megagames. Not one of its better efforts, but at only £2 you can decide.

Solar Winds

Epic Megagames

In Solar Winds, you play the role of bounty hunter Jake Stone. In your sparsely armoured spaceship you must explore the galaxy taking on various mercenary missions, fending off hostile pirates and chatting to mysterious alien races. As you travel across the galaxy a dark and mysterious plot develops, a plot that threatens humanity itself, a plot that won't be fully revealed until you solve the secret of Solar Winds.

Solar Winds is a 2D space combat game, using smooth-scrolling 256-color graphics to depict the action as you navigate your way around the galaxy. Although at first glance it looks a bit primitive, Solar Winds is actually quite fun to play and features some Privateer-style gameplay without all the jerky, memory-eating, 3D combat bits. With a sizeable lump of strategy chucked in there as well, Solar Winds has longevity stamped squarely on its forehead. All-in-all, it's a good, solid space adventure, if a little bit uninspiring.

ElectroMan

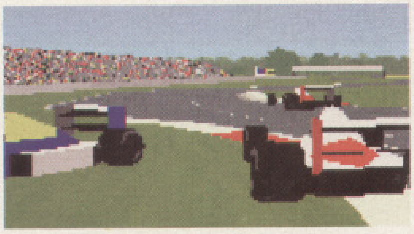
Epic Megagames

In ElectroMan, your starbase has been infiltrated by alien fiends, and you must journey through dozens of screens filled with arcade puzzles and run-jump-and-shoot action. Controlling a muscular Robocop look-a-like you must guide Electroman from platform to platform, destroying the robot walkers and collecting the power-ups.

Er... that's really about it. Just walk, jump and shoot things. Then walk back, jump a bit more and shoot other things. It's not as polished or as playable as Apogee's superb Halloween Harry but it isn't bad if you want to occupy a few minutes while the kettle is boiling. Otherwise it's not really worth bothering with. Might as well forget all about it.

WHAT DO Y

THIS MUCH?



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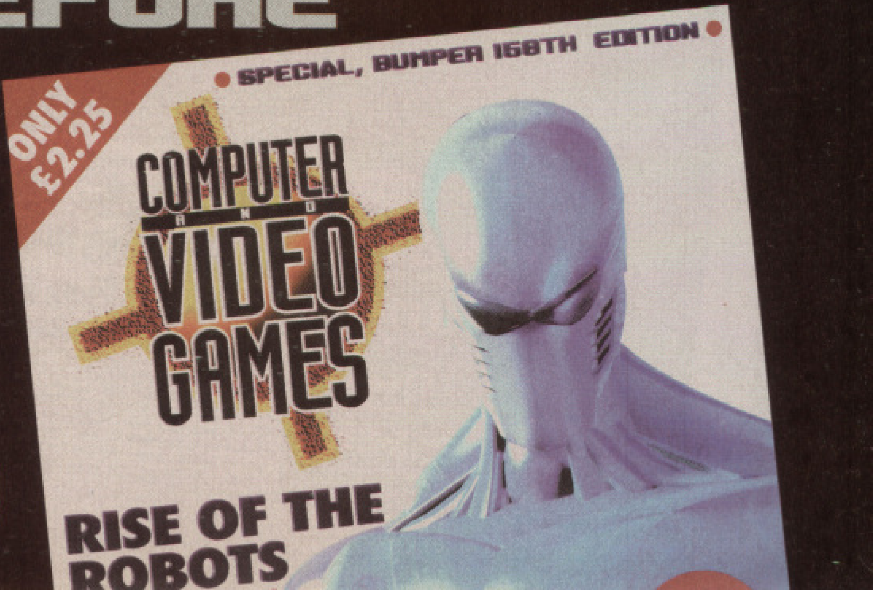

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RISE OF THE ROBOTS

feature

Imagine,

if you will, an alternate universe where all the characters who have ever appeared in a computer game really exist, and behave exactly as they do in their respective games.

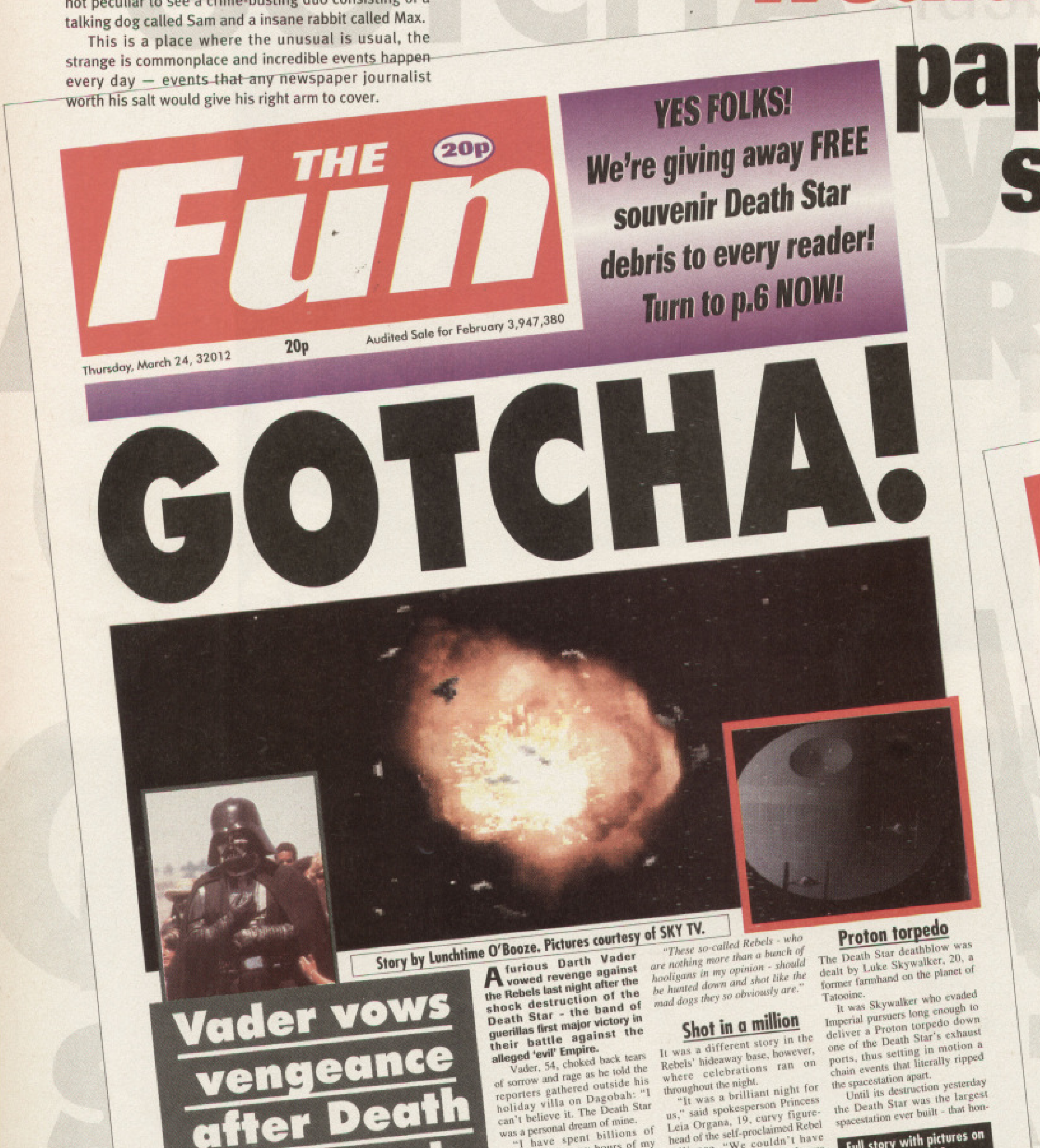
In this bizarre and slightly frightening place Guybrush Threepwood is desperately seeking the Secret of Monkey Island, the Terrans are locked in a life-or-death struggle with the feline Kilrathi, and it's not peculiar to see a crime-busting duo consisting of a talking dog called Sam and a insane rabbit called Max.

This is a place where the unusual is usual, the strange is commonplace and incredible events happen every day — events that any newspaper journalist worth his salt would give his right arm to cover.

Now let us imagine (look, you've got this far so you might as well carry on) that a hack from one of the sleazier tabloids falls through a fracture in the space-time continuum and finds himself in this weird dimension, and that somehow he manages to send back some scoop stories to his paper's Editor.

Join us, as we ask...

What *would* the papers say?



THE Fun 20p

Thursday, March 24, 32012 20p Audited Sale for February 3,947,380

YES FOLKS!
We're giving away FREE souvenir Death Star debris to every reader!
Turn to p.6 NOW!

GOTCHA!

Vader vows vengeance after Death Star shock

Story by Lunchtime O'Booze. Pictures courtesy of SKY TV.

A furious Darth Vader vowed revenge against the Rebels last night after the shock destruction of the Death Star - the band of guerillas first major victory in their battle against the alleged 'evil' Empire.

Vader, 54, choked back tears of sorrow and rage as he told the reporters gathered outside his holiday villa on Dagobah: "I can't believe it. The Death Star was a personal dream of mine.

"I have spent billions of Credits and many hours of my time bringing the Death Star project to fruition - money and time which I might as well have thrown in the bin.

"These so-called Rebels - who are nothing more than a bunch of hooligans in my opinion - should be hunted down and shot like the mad dogs they so obviously are."

Shot in a million

It was a different story in the Rebels' hideaway base, however, where celebrations ran on throughout the night.

"It was a brilliant night for us," said spokesperson Princess Leia Organa, 19, curvy figurehead of the self-proclaimed Rebel Alliance. "We couldn't have asked for a better result. It was quite literally a shot in a million. The lad Luke's a real star."

Proton torpedo

The Death Star deathblow was dealt by Luke Skywalker, 20, a former farmhand on the planet of Tatooine.

It was Skywalker who evaded Imperial pursuers long enough to deliver a Proton torpedo down one of the Death Star's exhaust ports, thus setting in motion a chain events that literally ripped the spacestation apart.

Until its destruction yesterday the Death Star was the largest spacestation ever built - that hon-

Full story with pictures on pages 2-10

TH
Fu
Friday, April 25, 2021
20p

THE Fun 20p

INSIDE! 20 Things You Never Knew About The Alien Invaders!

Monday, June 27, 2023 20p Audited Sale for February 3,947,380

GET OFF MY PLANET

...blahdy blah. Blah blah, blah blah, de-blahdy blah.

Major issues his sternest warning yet to invading aliens as Sim City 2000 burns

Exclusive by Crikey O'Reilly.

Prime Minister John Major gave a fiery speech at a Tory Party dinner last night, slamming the "slimy alien cowards" who "have repeatedly ignored this Government's warnings regarding the random invasion and total destruction of British-owned cities."

"If these outrages continue," he added, "I shall have no option other than to declare an immediate state of war. And let me stress now, this is not something I say lightly."

Very angry

Major's lates

Firemen tackling the blaze estimate it could be another week at least before the debris will be cool enough to allow inspection teams into the disaster zone.

No, really

The aliens first made their presence known just over three weeks with the destruction of the tiny village of Framley near Oxford. Experts believe this was a "trial run" for their subsequent attacks on various other cities, culminating in the total decimation of Sim City 2000.

THE Fun 20p

WHY DO TENTACLES MAKE SUCH GREAT LOVERS? – P.10

Tuesday, July 20, 2024 20p Audited Sale for February 3,947,380

PURPLE TENTACLE ATE MY HAMSTER!

Claims former foe Bernard

Exclusive by Katy Edelweiss. Pictures by Flash Gordon.

The glamorous world of show business was rocked last night by claims that Purple Tentacle, the popular Channel 4 breakfast telly presenter and part-time megalomaniac, has actually eaten a live hamster.

The shock allegations were made by the hamster's owner who wishes to be known only as 'Bernard'. The hamster involved was called Smokey and had apparently been trained to handle. 'Bernard' also claims to have saved the world from Mr Tentacle in a confrontation just over a year ago.

Tasty, tasty

When questioned about these outrageous allegations, Purple Tentacle said "No comment". However he later issued the following statement via his lawyers.

"The claims made against me by this so-called Mr 'Bernard' are completely unfounded and totally untrue.

"As a popular figure constantly in the public eye, I expect the occasional sling and arrow from the press and public. One does not, however, expect to be slurred like this.

"I have ordered my lawyers to look into the matter and advise me on appropriate legal action.

"In the meantime, I would like to remind fans that my new family comedy gameshow [illegible] starts this Saturday night at 10pm on Channel 4."

Very, very tasty

Although Purple Tentacle has always maintained a Hamster-free public front, this claim is merely the latest in a long line of allegations that have tainted the otherwise flawless reputation of the popular star in recent months.

Only two months ago, M

Fun 20p

Win £1,000,000 in our smashing Dingo Bingo game!

Au ebruary 3,947,380

OH NO!

Loony Lemmings plunge 400ft in suicide pact bid

Exclusive by 'Little' Jimmy Osmond.

Last night police chiefs ordered an immediate inquiry into the cause behind the bizarre deaths of over 100 Lemmings at Beachy Head.

According to eye witnesses in the nearby holiday resort of Giblets-On-Sea, the mob of Lemmings were seen marching towards the cliffs around 8pm.

Said one witness: "They looked so cute with their green hair and funny walk. We had no idea they were about to commit mass suicide."

Glazed

According to another witness the Lemmings had a "glazed" look in their eyes, as if "they were being controlled by some mysterious external force."

Police estimate the Lemmings reached the cliffs at 8.15pm, whereupon they spontaneously threw themselves over the edge to their deaths on the jagged rocks 400ft below.

Smashing blows

"It's a terrible tragedy," said Inspector Morse, the police chief in charge of the investigation. "As yet we haven't ascertained the motives behind the Lemmings' actions.

"*If anyone saw anything, anything at all, that they think might help our inquiry, we ask them to please come forward.*"

An inside source, who refused to be named, says that the police are currently working on the theory that the dead Lemmings had formed some

REVEALED! Saucy secrets of the lovesick Lemmings – p.4!

THE Fun 20p

Saturday, May 26, 2022 20p Audited Sale for February 3,947,380

IS YOUR CHAINSAW SERIAL NO. 45,718?

You could have WON a place in our monster killathon

BLOODY HELL!

45,718 demons die in Hades horror!

POLICE HUNT GUNMAN CAUGHT ON AMATEUR VIDEO

Exclusive by Fred South. Pictures by Sam Raimi.

Hell was in mourning yesterday following the murder of 45,718 demons in a vicious and apprently unprovoked attack by a mysterious masked man armed with a shotgun and a chainsaw.

Said Mr Satan Beelzebub, Hell's spokesman: "This is a very sad day for all of us here down in the fiery pits of Hades."

Doomed

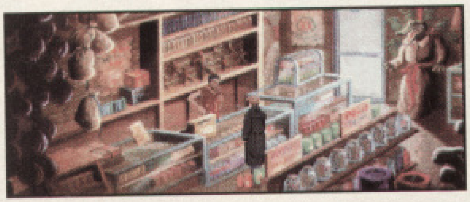
The gunman is believed to have entered Hell at around midday. At first onlookers believed he was just another lost soul cast down into the pit for all eternity. He then produced a shotgun from a concealed pocket inside his coat and proceeded to shoot innocent demons at random.

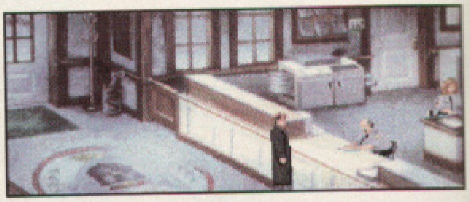
power up

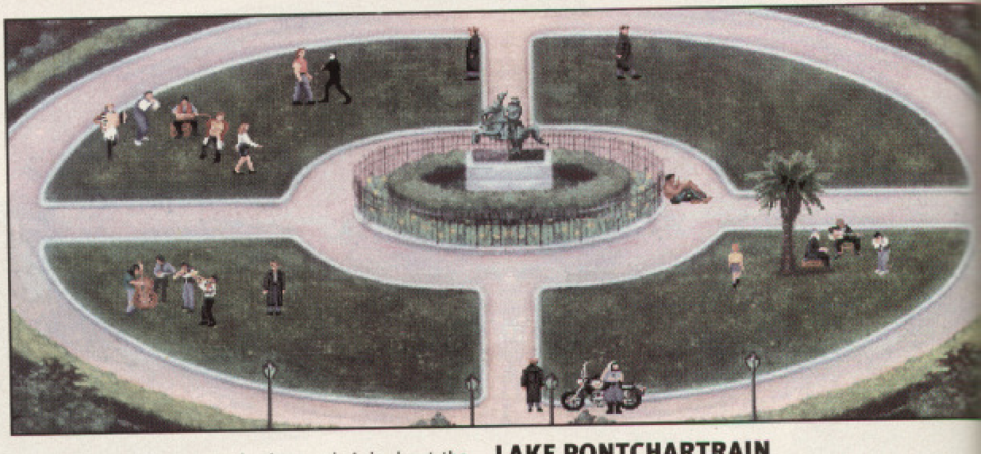
In Power Up we take the latest and greatest games, coat them in a special blend of herbs and spices and then fry them for several hours. Finally we serve them up to you, hot, delicious and ready to eat. On the menu this month you'll find complete solutions to Gabriel Knight and Police Quest: Open Season, a comprehensive playguide for Litil Divil, plus stacks of hacks in the Cheats Lab. Yum-yum, eh? Yeah, thought you might say that...

Sierra's best adventure yet is as tough as they come. But we're tougher, so here's our complete solution to the game.

Gabriel Knight







DAY 1

THE BOOKSHOP

First, talk to Grace. If you ask the same question twice, you may be able to get more information. Make sure you ask her about all your messages. Open the till. Take the voucher and try to take some money. When Bruno comes in, don't sell him the painting yet — although you might need to sell it later.

Read the paper, then take the tweezers and magnifying glass. Try reading the books on the shelf. Later, ask Grace to research Malia Gedde's address. In the bedroom, take the torch and the hair gel.

GRANDMA KNIGHT'S HOUSE

Talk to Grandma and ask her about your family including Harrison, Philip and Margaret Templeton Knight. Go upstairs to the attic. Take the sketchbook (don't forget to read it) and operate the clock. Move the hands to three o'clock and make sure that the dragon head is at the top. Operate the winder to open the secret drawer and take the photo and the letter. Examine both. Next, go back down and ask Grandma about Heinz Ritter.

POLICE STATION

Talk to the desk sergeant. Ask about Mosely and the photographs. When he gives you the envelope, open it and examine the contents.

After you've visited the crime scene, return and ask Mosely about the pattens in the sand. Ask about the six other patterns too. Leave his office and talk to Franks. Ask her to look at her file, then return it to her in-tray.

Now go and see Mosely and ask him about photos. When Franks comes in to take your photo, ask if you can check your hair. Leave the office, take the file from the in-tray and use it on the photocopier. Return it to the tray, then go back into the office and finish the photo session.

JACKSON SQUARE

Find the mime artist. Get him to follow you to the motorcycle cop, then when the cop runs after him use the radio on the bike. You'll find out the location of the crime scene.

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN

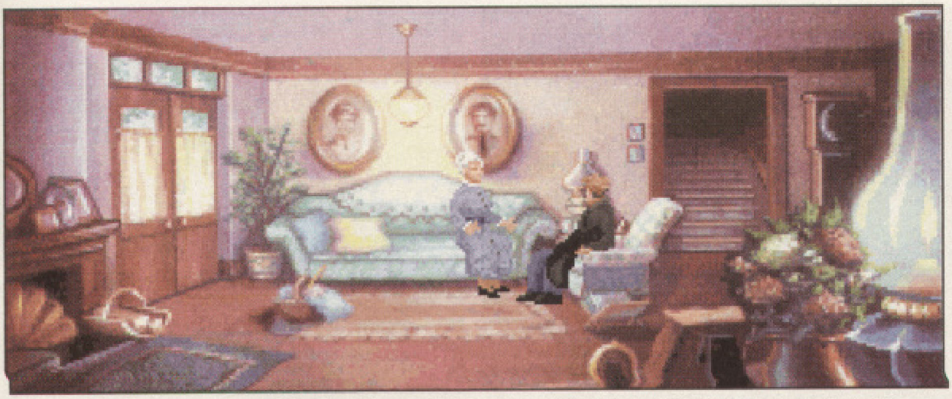
Look at the marks on the ground, then use your sketchbook to copy them. Use the magnifying glass on the grass by the tree, and pick up the snake scale with the tweezers. Take some clay from the shore of the lake.

DIXIELAND DRUGSTORE

Read the sign on the counter. Show the murder photo to Willy and ask him about everything.

ST LOUIS CATHEDRAL

Enter the room at the end of the aisle and look in the cupboard. Take the black shirt and the dog collar. You'll need these on another day — which, funnily enough, is coming up right... now!



DAY 2

THE BOOKSHOP

Read the paper again. After you've seen Madame Cazaunoux at Dixieland Drugstore, get Grace to research her.

POLICE STATION

Ask to see Mosely. Before entering his office, examine the temperature gauge by the door. Set it to maximum. Go in, then ask Mosely to get you a coffee. Steal the badge from his jacket then leave.

JACKSON SQUARE

See the artist lose his sketch. Then find the lucky dog vendor and give him the gift voucher. He'll give you a lucky dog, which you can then offer to the tap dancer. Tell him to retrieve the sketch, then return this to the artist. Give him your sketch of the pattern from the crime scene plus the copy of the other six patterns.

GEDDE'S MANSION

Knock on the door and ask to see Malia Gedde. Say you're on official business and show the butler Mosely's badge.

Once inside, speak to Malia and ask her about voodoo, Lake Pontchartrain and then flirt with her.

VOODOO MUSEUM

Ask Dr John about voodoo, then ask about historical and modern voodoo until he runs out of things to say. Ask about Marie Laveau. Also, try operating the switch by the door.

ST LOUIS CEMETERY

Ask the old man about Marie Laveau and other tombs. Look at the marks on Laveau's tomb, and then sketch them.

MAGENTIA MOONBEAM'S HOUSE

Show Magentia the pattern from the tomb, and then ask about St John's Eve, snakes and Grimwald. Ask her to dance with the snake then, while she's dancing, take the snake skin. Examine it with the magnifying glass.

DIXIELAND DRUGSTORE

Observe Madame Cazaunoux and ask Willy about masks and Willy Jr.

DAY 3

THE BOOKSHOP

Read the paper and ask Grace for messages. Get Wolfgang Ritter's number. When Bruno comes in, sell the painting. Read the directory page Grace gives you and try all the Cazaunoux numbers. Then call Cajun Critters and say you're worried about Castro. You can also try and call Wolfgang Ritter. Later, get Grace to research the artist's reconstruction of the pattern.

JACKSON SQUARE

Return to the artist and get the veve diagram. Then find the fortune teller and try and pick her up while she dances. Pick up her veil when she drops it, magnify it and take the snake scale using the tweezers. Magnify the scale.

DIXIELAND DRUGSTORE

Buy Willy Jr and take the Master Gambling Oil.

POLICE STATION

Enter Mosely's office and watch him interview Crash.

ST LOUIS CEMETERY

Find the Gedde tomb and talk to Malia.

TULANE UNIVERSITY

Sit in the lecture, then enter Professor Hartridge's office. Ask him about Cabrit Sans Cor and show him the murder photo and the veve diagram. Ask about Black Voodoo and St John's Eve.

MADAME CAZAUNOUX'S HOUSE

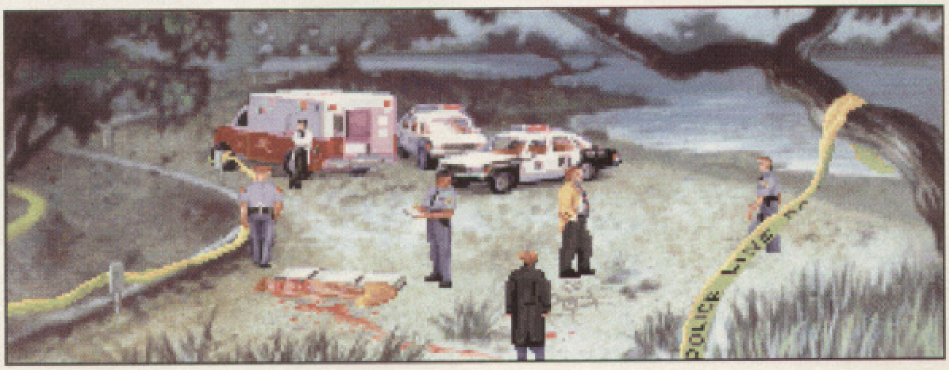
Use the priest costume and hair gel, then knock on the door. Ask Madame Cazaunoux about Cabrit Sans Cor, human sacrifice, voodoo queens and voodoo hounfour. Offer to bless the bracelet, then quickly use the clay on it to make an impression.

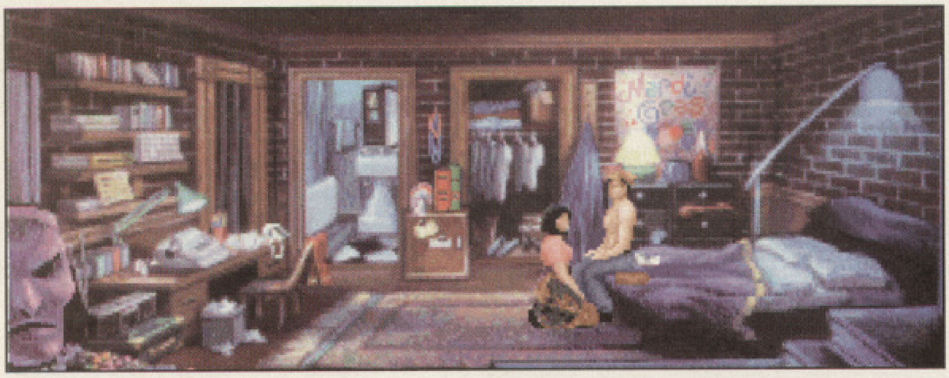
GRANDMA KNIGHT'S HOUSE

Ask her about Wolfgang Ritter.

NAPOLEON HOUSE

Talk to the bartender, ask about voodoo, bar patrons (twice) and Sam and voodoo. Talk to Sam and give him the Master Gambling Oil. Watch what happens, then give him the clay impression of the bracelet.





DAY 4

THE BOOKSHOP

Read the paper then, after meeting Crash, ask Grace to research Rada Drums.

NAPOLEON HOUSE

Get the bracelet from Sam.

JACKSON SQUARE OVERLOOK

Use the binoculars on the far left. Watch Crash talk to the drummer.

ST LOUIS CATHEDRAL

Talk to Crash after giving him the bracelet. Ask about the drummer, voodoo, voodoo murders and hounfour in that order. When he dies, examine his body, open his shirt and sketch his tattoo. Close the shirt.

POLICE STATION

Ask Mosely about case status.

DAY 5

THE BOOKSHOP

Grace will give you the drum book, newspaper clipping, Gunther's journal and a letter. Read them all. After visiting the museum, Grace will take something from your face and place it in the ashtray. Examine the ashtray and pick up the scale with the tweezers. Magnify it.

TULANE UNIVERSITY

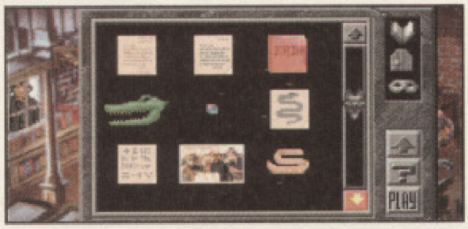
Look at Hartridge and take his notes.

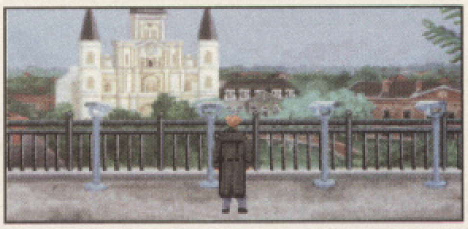
VOODOO MUSEUM

When the snake attacks you, use the switch by the door.

JACKSON SQUARE

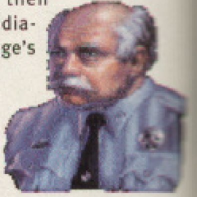
Talk to the fortune teller.





POLICE STATION

Ask Mosely about case status, then reopen case. Give him the veve diagram, newspaper clipping, Hartridge's notes and the snake scales.



DAY 6

THE BOOKSHOP

Read the paper, as usual. Take the envelope from the doormat and open it. Read the note. Give Grace the tattoo sketch and get her to paint it on you. Talk about the party and tell her she's jealous.

JACKSON SQUARE

Talk to the beignet vendor and tell him to go back to the police station. Then find the drummer and use the drum book on him to translate the codes (call conclave, swamp, tonight).

POLICE STATION

When the beignet vendor arrives use the key to open Mosely's office. Open the desk drawer and take the tracking device.

VOODOO MUSEUM

Use the tracking device in the sekey madoule (coffin).

ST LOUIS CEMETERY

Sketch the new message on the tomb. Guess the missing letters. Wait to the old man leaves, the pick up the brick and use it on the tomb. Write "DJ bring sekey madoule."

BAYOU ST JOHN

Use the tracker and follow the flashing dot. Before you enter the ceremony, put on the Willy Jr mask. You'll be asked two questions: the answers are Damballah and Ougoun Badagris. Now you can take part in the ceremony.

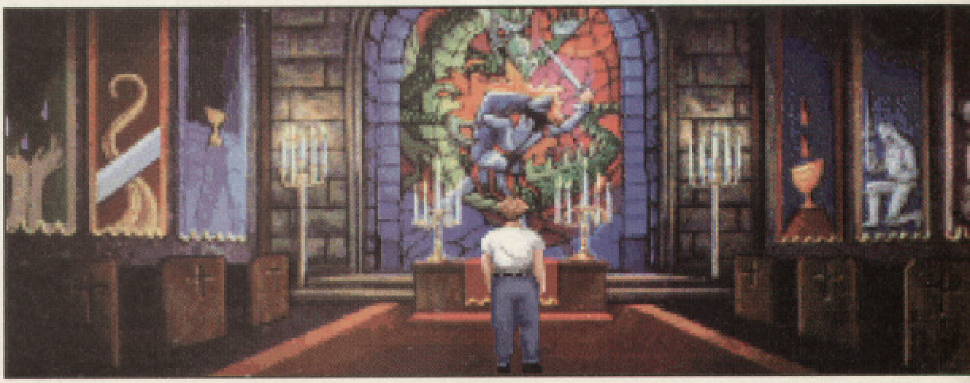
DAY 7

THE BOOKSHOP

Call Wolfgang Ritter and ask about Tetelo, the talisman (twice), Tetelo's remains and Africa Homeland. After visiting the cemetery, call the travel agent and ask to go to Rittersberg. Use Mosely's credit card to pay for the flight and go to the airport.

ST LOUIS CEMETERY

The Gedde tomb is open, so press the button and go inside. Use the torch and open the draw with the veve pattern on it — you'll find Mosely inside. After you've been knocked out, open the drawer again and take the wallet. Open it and take the credit card.



SCHLOSS RITTER CASTLE HALL

Talk to Gerde. After exploring the chapel and bedroom, ask her about the portal poem, chapel panels and initiation ceremony. Take the salt cellar and the knife.

BEDROOM

Look at the locked door carefully, and read the message above it. After talking to Gerde, take the pot and scissors from the dresser and the scroll from the picture frame. Open the window and use the snow. Use the scissors on Gabriel and go to the chapel.

CHAPEL

Look at the wall panels.

After you've talked to Gerde about the initiation ceremony and used the snow and scissors in the bedroom, put the pot on the altar. Use the salt on it, then use the knife on Gabriel. Use the altar itself to kneel, then use the scroll. Go to bed.

DAY 8

BEDROOM

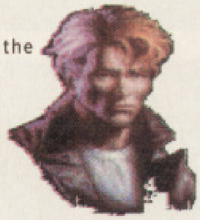
Take the key from the end of the bed. Use it to open the locked door.

LIBRARY

Examine all the shelves and read the books. Each book should point you to another book. After you've found 'Ancient Digs of Africa' show the book to Gerde.

HALL

When you've given Gerde the book, give her the credit card.



DAY 9

SNAKE MOUND

Walk to the mound. Inside, there are 12 chambers arranged like a clock face. Walk round, picking up all the tiles and removing loose tiles from the walls. Also pick up the snake rod. Count the snakes on each tile. Tiles 7 and 12 are stuck fast in the wall. Place the loose tiles in the correct wall slots. When they're all in the correct place, go to the three o'clock room and SAVE THE GAME!

Use the snake rod in the tile hole. Now the mummies will come back to life — you have to avoid them! Walk clockwise (up the screen) and head straight for the door to avoid the first mummy. Do the same in the next room, keeping left.

The five o'clock room's a toughie. First walk right, then head for the door at the top. You may need to repeat this several times to succeed.

In the six o'clock room there are several mummies. Use the vines to swing past into the next room. Here you'll meet Wolfgang. Save again. Use the snake rod on the hole just inside the secret passage to get into the inner ring.

Now talk to Wolfgang. Walk right to the stone table. Examine the carvings at the bottom and the trough at the top. Pick up the two bars (one at a time) and, when they are both on the table, use them. Then go left and use the knife on the dead mummy. Wolfgang will die but you'll get the talisman.

DAY 10

THE BOOKSHOP

Read the paper and the note on the till. When Mosely reappears, ask him about everything.

ST LOUIS CATHEDRAL

Enter the right confessional. Use the snake rod on the knot hole. Leave it and the second tracking device under the bench, then leave the 'lift' and go through the door on the right.

HOUNFOUR

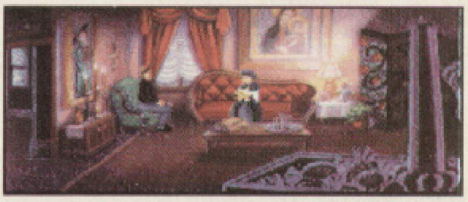
The rooms are arranged like the rooms at the snake mound. Three are locked. The lights above the door will tell you how the rooms are arranged — the lift lobby is at six o'clock. Room 7 contains ceremonial items. Take two masks and two robes.

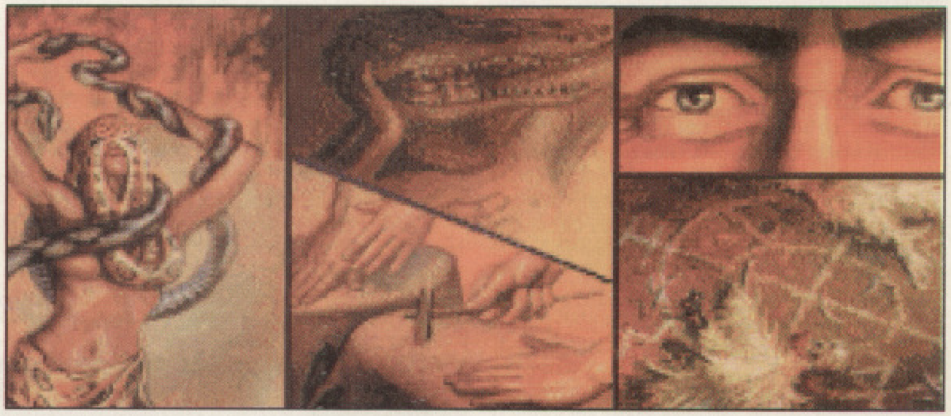
Go to Room 4 and take the record book. Dr John is in Room 2. You need the keycard on the wall, so go into the central chamber and use the drums. Using the drum book and record book, beat out the message 'Summon Brother Eagle'. Leave, avoiding the three o'clock passageway, then enter Dr John's room and get the keycard. Leave quickly and go straight to Room 1.

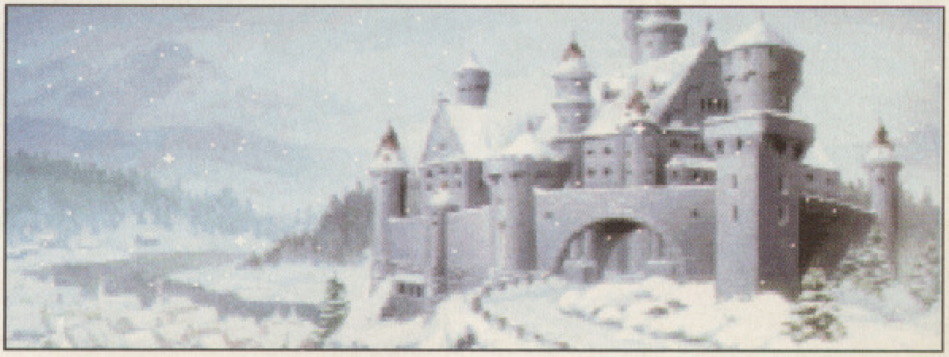
Use the keycard on the door and enter, taking all the money you can carry. You can also look inside Room 11. Then go to Room 8 and use the keycard again. SAVE THE GAME! Use the talisman on Grace. When Mosely enters, give him the boar costume and put on the wolf costume. You'll be escorted to the ceremony.

Use the talisman on Malia/Tetelo. Next, use it on Mosely. When Malia/Tetelo grabs you, get the idol from the table.

Finally, when Malia is hanging over the lava, pick her up. The end sequence will now take place. You've completed the game!

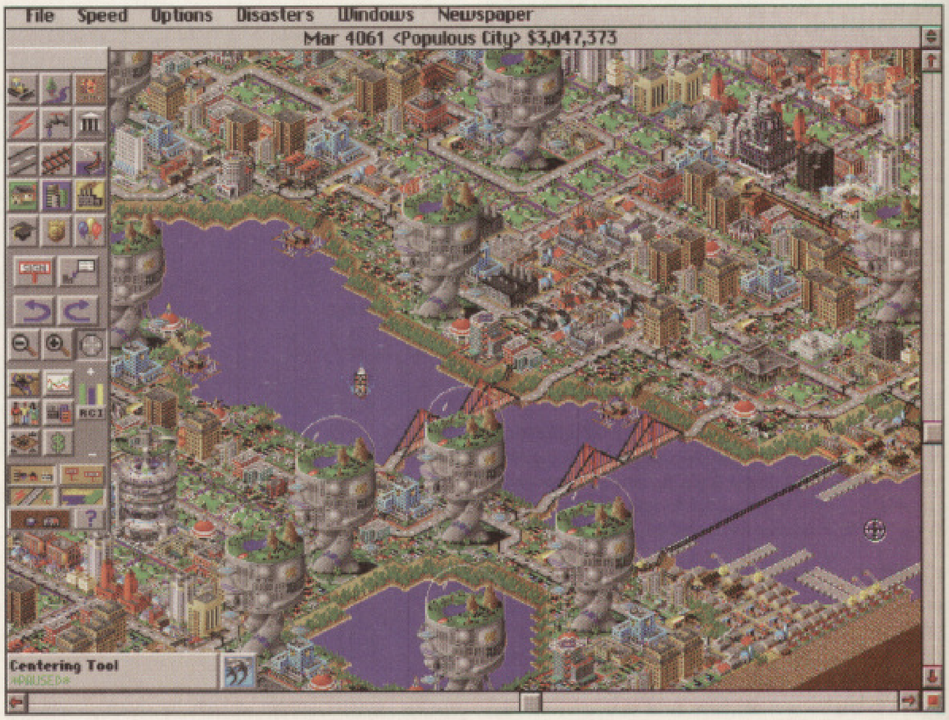






If your city creations are little more than slums, our resident SimCity addict Christina Erskine has some tips for painless town planning.

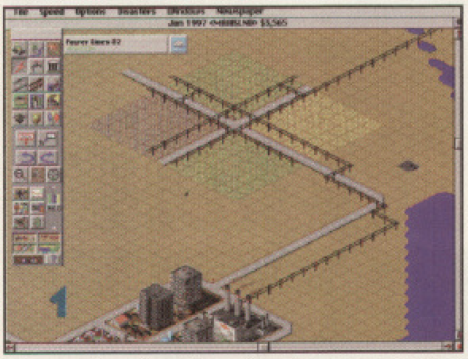
SimCity 2000



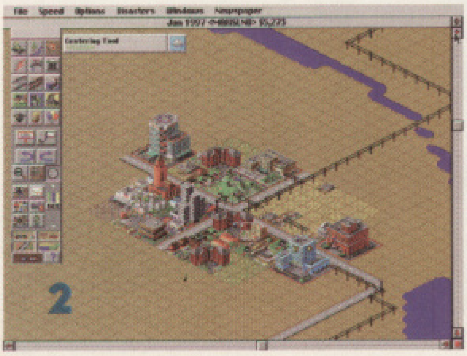
Whether you plan your cities in advance or just try to let them grow organically, there is a knack to making sure your city gets off to a good start. At the beginning, you need to concentrate on staying solvent and keeping the demand for each of the three types of development (resident, commercial and industrial) high, so that areas don't deteriorate into slums.

Small is beautiful

Both these can be accomplished at the same time by keeping development limited to small areas at a time. It's very tempting, when faced with a wide expanse of flat terrain, to try to create huge housing estates and industrial parks. It won't work. Sims don't like to travel far to work, so keep the residential, commercial and industrial blocks compact and close to each other: six squares by six squares of each at a time will encourage growth (see Picture 1). It doesn't matter if this isn't how you want the city to look eventually: you can always come back and bulldoze the area later when you're rich and powerful.



One of the most efficient ways to build a thriving city is to work in self-contained units. If you calculate one unit as consisting of, say, a six by twelve residential zone, a six by six commercial zone, and a six by six industrial zone, plus a police station, hospital, school and fire station (and, if your budget will run to it, a large park) you should be able to set it up, wait until you run into profit, then repeat the pattern a number of times for quick and stable growth — see Picture 2.



Once the city gets going, money is most likely to be tight when you need to invest in an extra power station to meet demand. Taking out a single $10,000 bond should be fairly painless, but it's worth trying to pay the loan back early — and if you start piggy-backing loans on top of one another, you're asking for trouble.

If you continue to find yourself in trouble with the bank, you can always resort to the Maxis Money-Builder. This is a tried and tested way of improving finances without cheating (although if you *do* want to cheat, have a look at the 'Naughty, Naughty!' panel).

NAUGHTY, *NAUGHTY!*

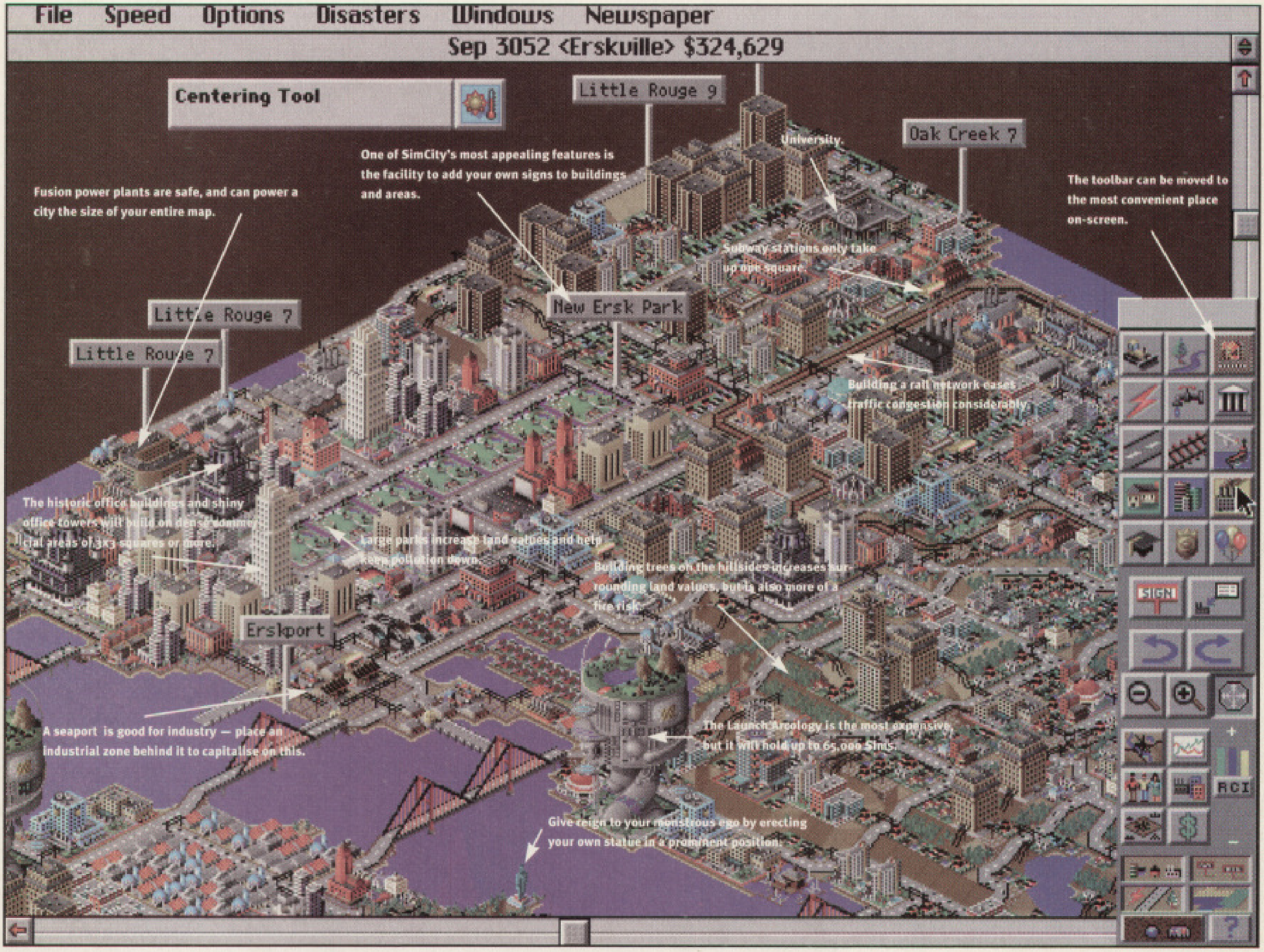
If you really can't resist cheating, and you're experienced enough to use a file editor such as Norton or PC Tools, try this Norwegian Hack listed below:

1. Load up your file editor.
2. Go into the Savegame file.
3. Locate line 0000020, and the number eight columns in from the left.
4. Change this number to 77.
5. Start a new game and save it immediately.
6. Hey presto! $2 billion in the bank.

Remember to back up your files before you start altering them. PC GAMES strongly advises that you don't hack program files unless you know what you're doing, and won't take any responsibility if it all goes wrong.

SPOT *TIPS*

- Sims will build a maximum of three squares away from a road or railway, so normally there's little point in building zones of more than six by six squares without a road running through. However, if you plonk a park in the middle of a larger zone, you'll raise the land values around it as well as giving yourself more space to work in.
- If your residential zones are proving to be a bit too far away from the commercial and industrial blocks and your Sims are abandoning their homes, you can effect a quick fix by rezoning the odd square, say, at road intersections as 'commercial'. It's amazing how many Sims can be employed in one corner shop.
- Build your main power station on an island — build the island, if necessary — to make it almost invulnerable to disasters that cause fires to break out, such as tornadoes, earthquakes, air crashes and, er, fire. If you build up the island to at least a height of two squares, it shouldn't ever get flooded.
- Site the airport away from tall buildings — unless you enjoy air crashes.
- Start your city off near a corner of the map. You can boost your commercial prospects early by building connections to neighbouring towns.
- Early on, lower the tax rate on electronics and aerospace. This spurs on industrial demand in the late 20th Century.
- On the ordinances screen, levying a sales tax will send your commercial areas spiralling downhill. Parking fines are a good money-raiser, and Sims can usually tolerate income tax as well.
- Build water pumps right next to lakes and rivers. They're just a waste of money built inland.
- Spend on police stations and schools. Sims will move out if the crime rate is too high. Theoretically, industry and commerce will be adversely affected if the population is uneducated, but this is difficult to prove either way.



Fusion power plants are safe, and can power a city the size of your entire map.

One of SimCity's most appealing features is the facility to add your own signs to buildings and areas.

University.

The toolbar can be moved to the most convenient place on-screen.

Subway stations only take up one square.

Building a rail network eases traffic congestion considerably.

The historic office buildings and shiny office towers will build on dense commercial areas of 3x3 squares or more.

Large parks increase land values and help keep pollution down.

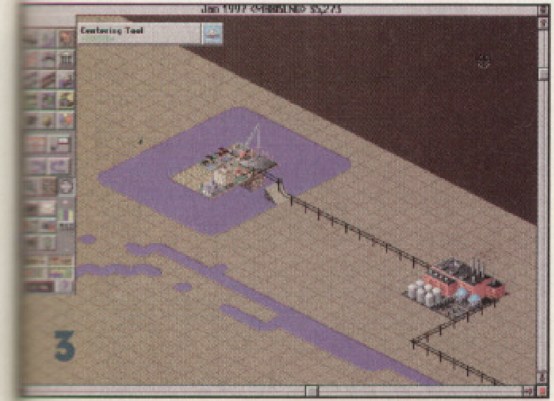
Building trees on the hillsides increases surrounding land values, but is also more of a fire risk.

A seaport is good for industry — place an industrial zone behind it to capitalise on this.

The Launch Arcology is the most expensive, but it will hold up to 65,000 Sims.

Give reign to your monstrous ego by erecting your own statue in a prominent position.

1. Find a large expanse of flat terrain.
2. Create a 3x3 squares residential zone in the middle.
3. Create a 1x3 commercial block directly adjacent to it.
4. Create a 2x2 industrial block so that you have a neat rectangle.
5. Put a single road square in the middle of the residential zone.
6. Surround the entire rectangle with three blocks of water.
7. Connect your island up to the power station. (See Picture 3.)
8. Repeat as necessary. These mini-towns will have low crime rates and pollution levels, while paying plenty of taxes.



3

Power to the people

You also want to pick an economical power source to start with. Oil and gas are expensive and inefficient, and I prefer to create eight adjacent squares of falling water and build eight squares worth of hydroelectric power at first. When power consumption exceeds supply — not that long in a fast-growing city — add a coal power station on the outskirts of town (which minimises the inevitable pollution). The big advantage of hydroelectric power is that you don't have to renew the plant every 50 years, so it's cheap in the long run.

Coal does need renewing and makes pollution a problem, so as soon as solar and wind power become available, I usually switch to these, though you need four solar power stations to achieve the output of one coal plant. However, they suffice as a stop-gap until fusion power is invented. Fusion is expensive but worth it, since one fusion plant can power the entire map.

The middle game

Once the city is ticking over profitably and business is booming, it's time to consolidate. Keep the Sims happy with leisure facilities: parks and marinas are economical. Stadia are expensive and zoos, for some reason, seem to encourage crime. You'll almost certainly find traffic gets very congested very quickly, and you'll need to invest in a mass transit system.

- The quick and easy public transport system is a bus network. Place stations so that buses will start and stop en route in different zones — buses travelling from one terminus in a residential area to another in the middle of a housing estate won't attract so many passengers.
- Railways can carry a lot of Sims at a time, but they take up a lot of space and can wreck the layout of your carefully planned city. If you want to let the train take strain, it's probably better to plan around it from a very early stage.
- Subways are expensive — don't build them until you're well in the black — and fiddly to placve, but they're also efficient, pollution free and low on maintenance. Best of all, the stations take up only one square, so they can be easily integrated into an already thriving city.

By this stage, you'll be approaching the magic population figure of 120,000, when you can start building arcologies if funds permit. To speed growth, view the city with the buildings turned off and check that your residential areas are all zoned as dense. If not, bulldoze the light residential areas and rezone densely.

Increase funds by planting trees on the slopes where you can't build, and add some parks wherever there seems to be wasted space. This raises land values, which means the residents have to pay you more in tax.

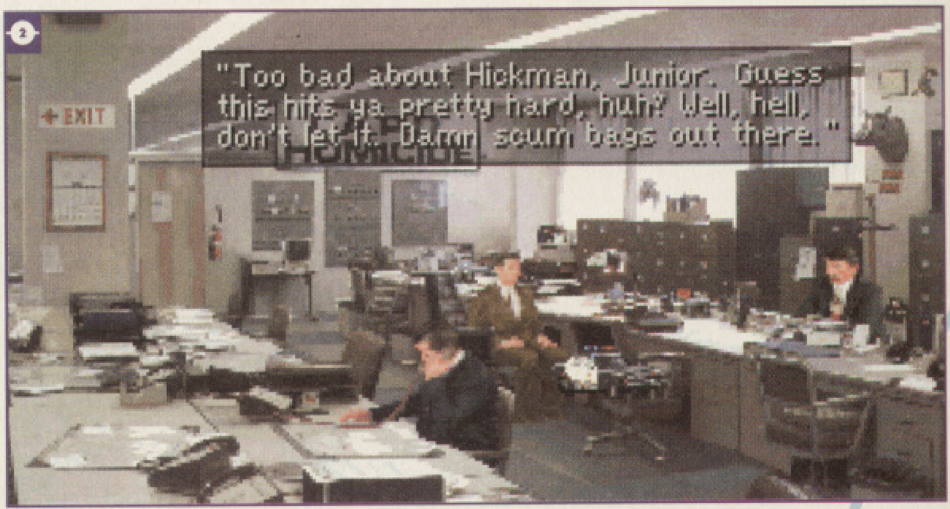
Get that first arcology up quickly. With a capacity of at least 30,000 Sims, your income from taxes will increase steadily and, hopefully, any financial worries should be over. Indeed, by the time you've scraped enough dosh together for the first five arcologies and they're filling up, you should find your next problem is what to spend your vast wads of cash on.

Police Quest: Open Season

Having trouble keeping the crime statistics down? Don't worry - we're here to help. So grab your I.D., strap on your gun and let's go book 'em, Danno...

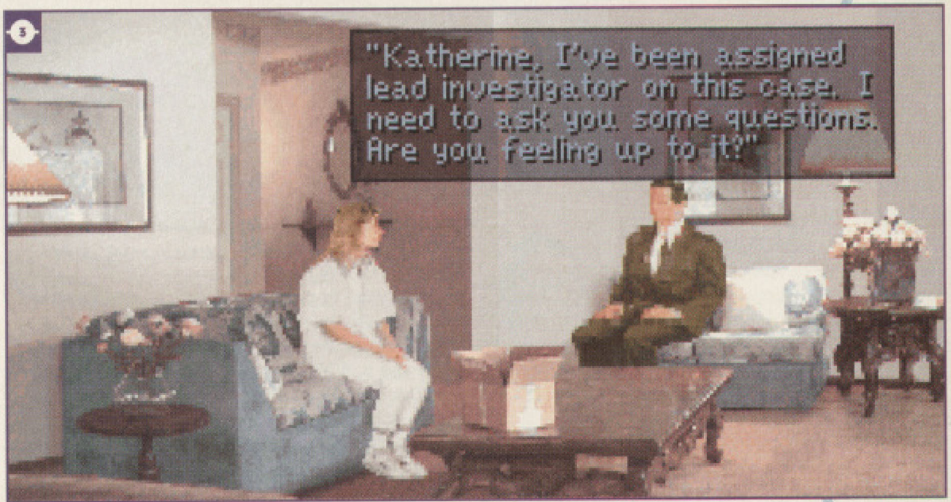
BEFORE *WE START:* A NOTE ON NOTES

Every time you make a discovery or interview someone, you must remember to use your notebook to take down notes. If you don't your findings won't be admissible as evidence. Yes, we know it's time-consuming - but you won't be able to complete the game if you don't do it.



②

"Too bad about Hickman, Junior. Guess this hits ya pretty hard, huh? Well, hell, don't let it. Damn scum bags out there."



③

"Katherine, I've been assigned lead investigator on this case. I need to ask you some questions. Are you feeling up to it?"

1. THE SCENE OF THE *CRIME*

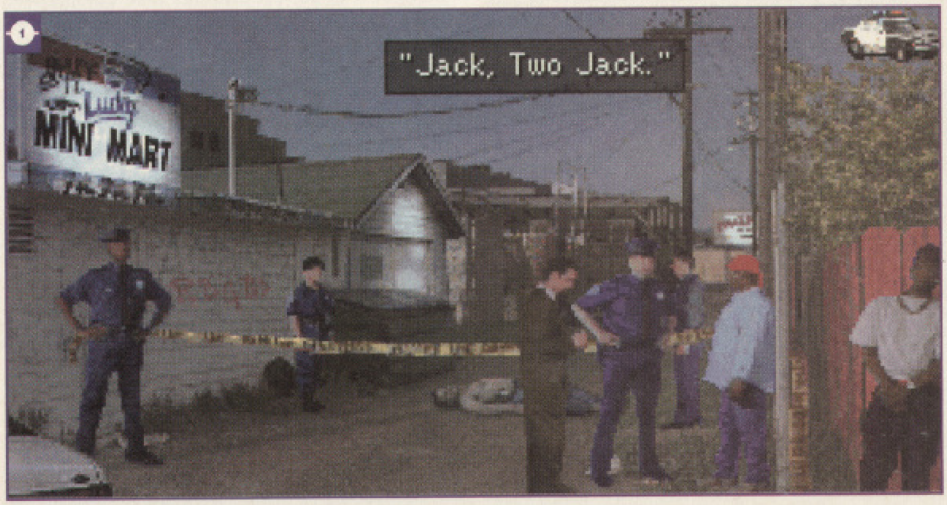
The coroner and two officers are here waiting for you, along with your best friend Bob Hickman - he's the one lying on the floor full of holes. Ask the officers and coroner what happened, then turn your attention to the two street punks hanging around on the corner. If we had our way we'd shoot them in the shins and ask questions later but unfortunately you're not allowed to do that, so settle for questioning them.

Get your crime kit out of the car. Take out the chalk and click on the body to draw a circle around it and the cigarette next to it. Now go over to the graffiti and touch it - the paint's wet. Examine the bin and open it - there's a child's body inside. Take more notes then talk to the officers and coroner again.

2. AT THE POLICE *STATION*

Head for your desk when the captain's finished with you - it's the one opposite the unfortunately named Detective Bottoms. Sit down and take the letter from the tray. Read it to find out you need to retake your shooting test, then take copy of Form 3.14 from the right-hand desk door and use your notepad on it.

Next, take the photograph from the left-hand drawer and examine it to find the telephone number of the CRASH unit. Give them a bell, then hand the form to Bottoms. Go over to the computer at the back of the office and enter your ID, which is 612, and the password GUNNER. Select the file 'Rude Boys Go To Hell' to find out more info on the gang you're after.



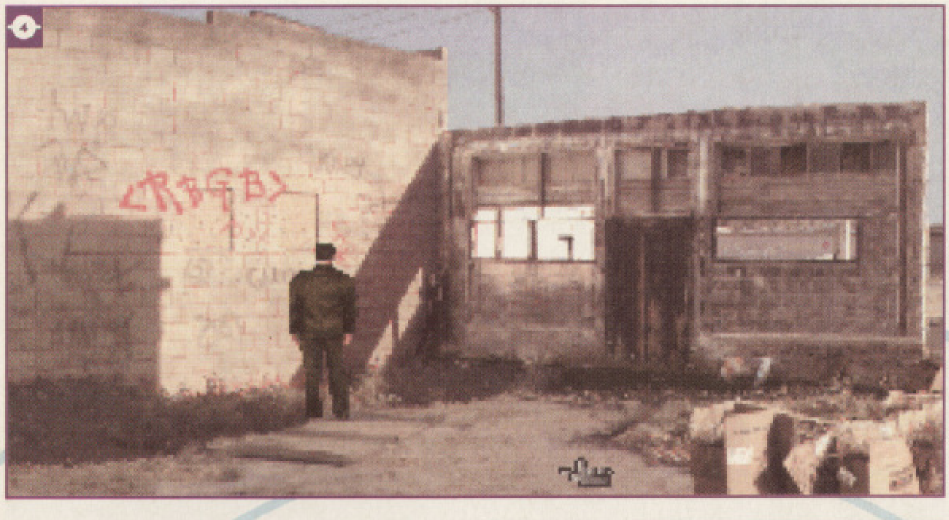
①

"Jack, Two Jack."

When you've done that, talk to Bottoms about all the relevant subjects them leave the station. To get past the reporter, click on her with the USE cursor to bundle her out of the way. Head over to Hickman's house and chat to his wife, but don't upset her as you need to go back later.

3. IN THE *MORGUE*

This isn't the nicest place in the world, especially as the junior mortician bombards you with crap jokes. Talk to Deputy Noble and pick up Hickman and the child's effects, then head over to Hickman's house to give his wife his possessions. She'll give you his bullet proof vest. Finally, get the pill bottles from the closest.



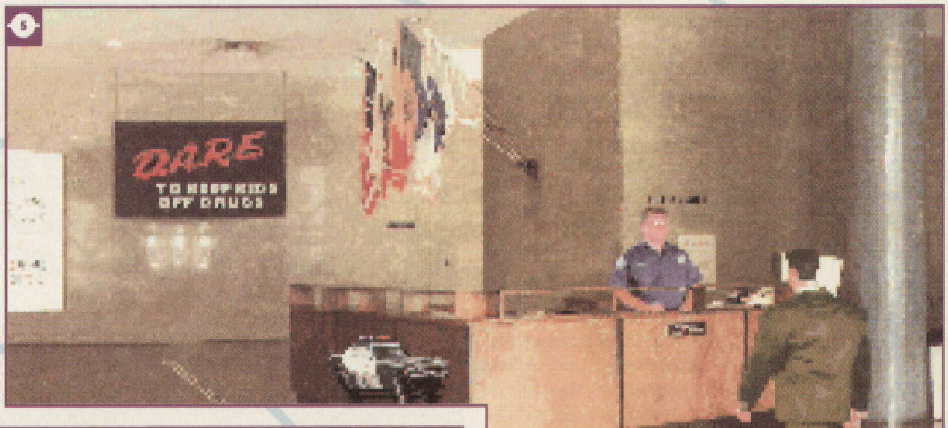
4. DOWN THE *ALLEY*

Return to the alley where Hickman was killed and go north to the next yard. Examine the graffiti and dig the bullets out of the wall with the knife from your crime kit. Bung them in an envelope and take down some more notes. Go along to the next alley and flash your badge at the delinquents there. Interview them and pop into the shop. After you've had a chin-wag with the shop assistant pick up an apple and some glue - and don't forget to pay.

Walk right until you come across a little girl. Show her your badge then bribe her with the apple to get her to answer your questions. Go to Bobby Washington's house and give Bobby's effects to his mother before questioning her. Go back to your car, then back to the house and talk to the girl again.

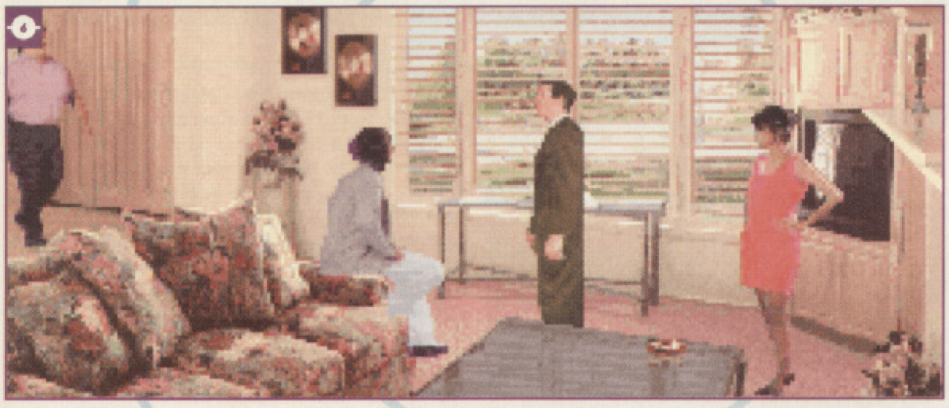
5. AT THE *OFFICE*

To get into the office you need to put on your Parker Centre I.D. badge. Go to the fourth floor and put the bullets into the property department. Take the lift to SID in the basement and hand the glue and pills to the officer there. Find out the latest info on the case from her and go back to your office, where they'll be a phone call for you. It's from one of the youths you encountered by the alley. Do as he says and meet him back at the alley, but duck behind your car to avoid the gunfire. As soon as it's safe, get your shotgun from the boot and blast the windows.



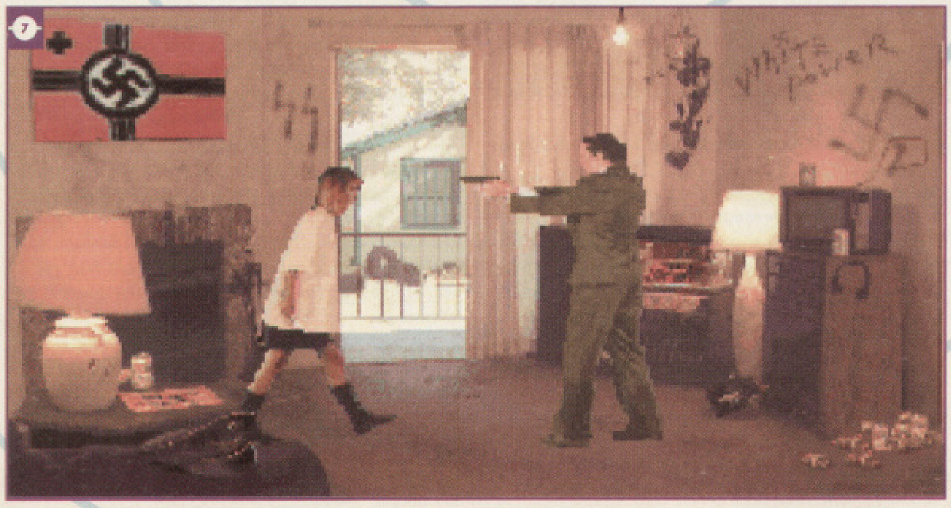
6. YO *MONEY*

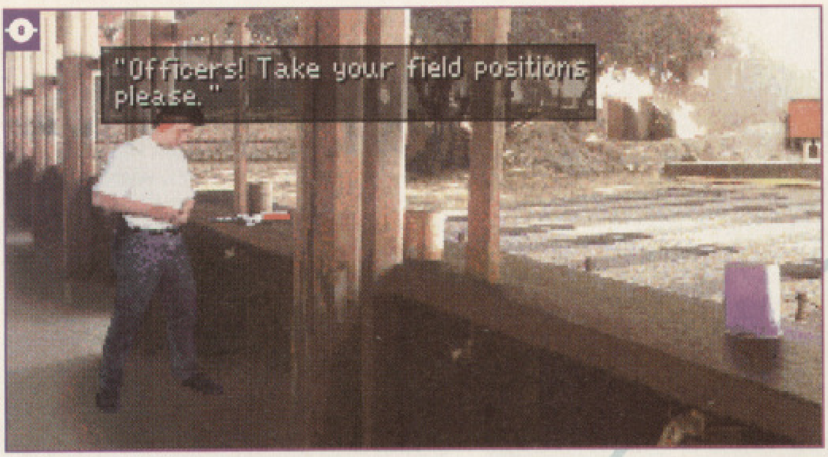
You start the morning with another blast from your boss. When he's finished head for your desk and fill in a follow-up form before finding out the latest development from Bottoms. Go to SID and pick up your gun then drive over to Yo Money's mansion. Before you knock on the door search the flower bed to find a red shoe. Knock on the door and show Mr Money's bodyguard your badge. Inside, question Money and his girlfriend and they'll tell you to check out a man called Dennis Walker.



7. BACK AT THE *OFFICE*

When you return to your desk fill in another follow-up form and check out Walker and Strauss on the computer. Once you've got the info you need drive over to Walker's house - flash him your badge and go in. As you turn down the stereo Walker's girlfriend attacks you and Walker escapes. Show her the error of her ways by pointing your gun at her face, speak to her twice and handcuff her before she can make another move. Now return to the office and call up her details on the computer. Then get the memo from your tray and fill in yet another report form. Finally, head round to Bob's house, speak to his wife and pay a visit to the Short Stop bar.

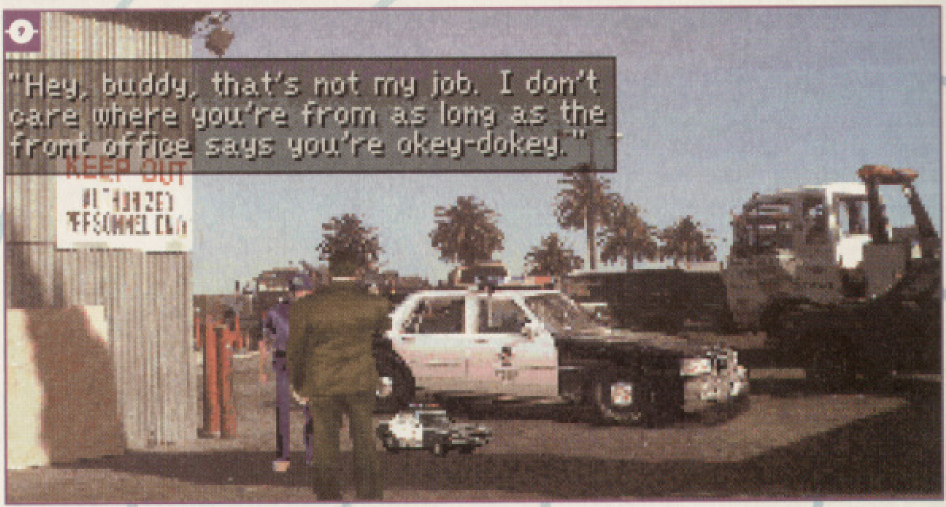




"Officers! Take your field positions please."

8. TAKE THE *GUN TEST*

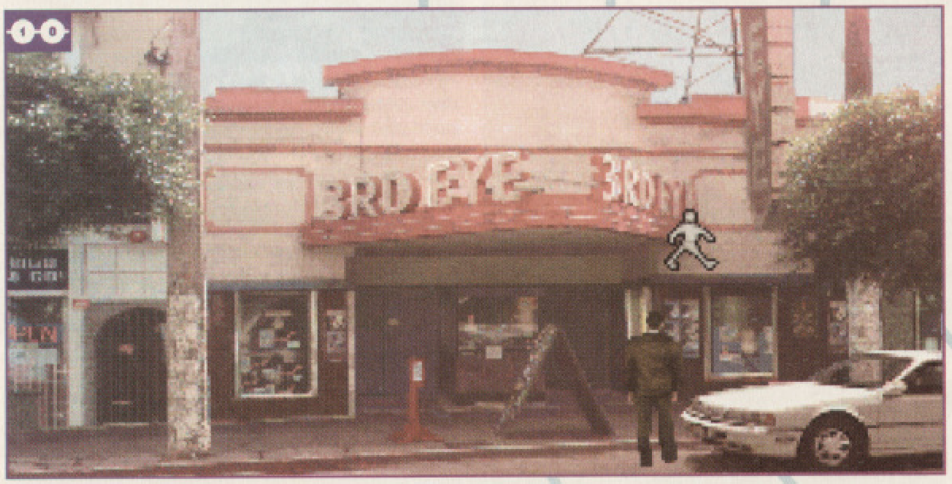
You start the day at City Hall, where you encounter Walker again. He reacts like typical criminal scum and attacks you. Wave your gun in his face, speak to him twice and handcuff him. Back at the office you've got to fill in yet another form and find out what's going on from Bottoms and CID. After that it's time for your gun test. Before you start shooting you've got to fill in form 13.5.0. Then grab your ammo and earmuffs. You get plenty of time, so take it easy. When you've passed, hand in your earmuffs and head over to the impound.



"Hey, buddy, that's not my job. I don't care where you're from as long as the front office says you're okey-dokey."

9. THE *CAR POUND*

Show your badge to the attendant, question him then inspect the car. Grab the newspaper scrap from the front seat and read it. Return to the morgue before visiting the record shop on Hollywood and Vine. Speak to the man outside and the shopkeeper. Move on to the Bitty Kitty bar and go up to the girl inside and show her the shoe. Light her cigarette and then hand her the paper. Leave the bar and get the broken mirror from your car.



Visit the park next. To get the dog away from the dig, show it its reflection in the mirror. Get the bone it was pawing at and put it in the envelope. Hand it to CID in the office, fill in another form, and take the bone over to the Morgue. When you've finished there, return to the Bitty Kitty and interview Barbie Cann before showing her the shoe.

10. HEY - *IT'S THURSDAY!*

Get updates from CID, Bottoms and the Morgue. Pop over to the Third Eye Theatre, buy a ticket and go inside. Interview Mitchell Thurman first then search the place. When you've finished, go back to the office and tell the Lieutenant that you don't think the killer is a woman.

Go back to the alley and poke around again to find the rope, which is secreted in the packing cases. From there, return to the car pound and take a look at the car with the registration E 2BSY669. Check the number on the computer to find out it belongs to the Health Centre. Go there next and speak to the receptionist, who'll tell you that the car belongs to Luella Parker, who's gone missing. You'll also find a tape and files on Cann and Thurman.

Go back to the bar and show Barbie Cann her file. She'll tell you she's having matrimonial problems – as if you really care. Hand the tape to the bloke in the record shop, who'll give you a drumstick in return.

11. IN THE *PARK*

The dog's returned. This time catch it with the rope. It should drag you into a blind alley. Open the door there with your crowbar, fire-up your torch and head inside. Open the next door with your palette knife, go through and stop at the bottom of the stairs.

To find out what's in store, glue the mirror to the end of the stick and poke it around the door at the top of the steps. Go up and open the fridge to find a human head. When the dog appears, put it to sleep with Bob's medicine.

Search the room and you should find a shoe and a trapdoor in the cupboard. Go through it and into the storeroom. You can't get back, so head out through the theatre auditorium, where you'll find an unconscious woman. Search the foyer and you'll find the key hidden in a Coke can on the counter. Search the washroom to find an aerosol in the cabinet. Unlock the towel dispenser to find a hyperdermic needle.

12. THE *GRAND FINALE*

Return to the auditorium and you'll see a woman in red leaving. Unlock the storeroom door with the key, switch the torch on and enter – where you'll be knocked out. When you come to you'll find yourself confronted by a dog. Look under the sofa and get its ball. Throw it through the window and the dog will trot off after it.

Go back to the fridge and recover the lighter from the head's mouth. You can use it in conjunction with the aerosol to make a blow torch. Go to the bedroom where you'll find the woman in red, who'll attack you. Defend yourself with the jury-rigged blow torch and your case will be solved. All in a day's work, ma'am...

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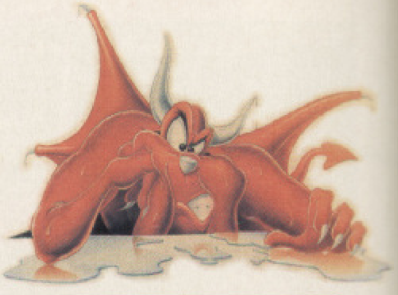
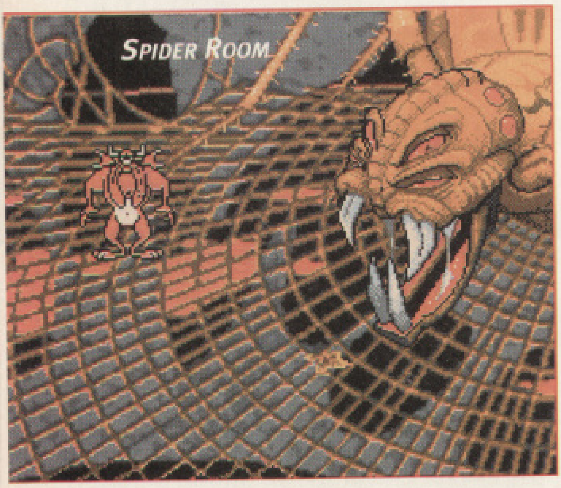
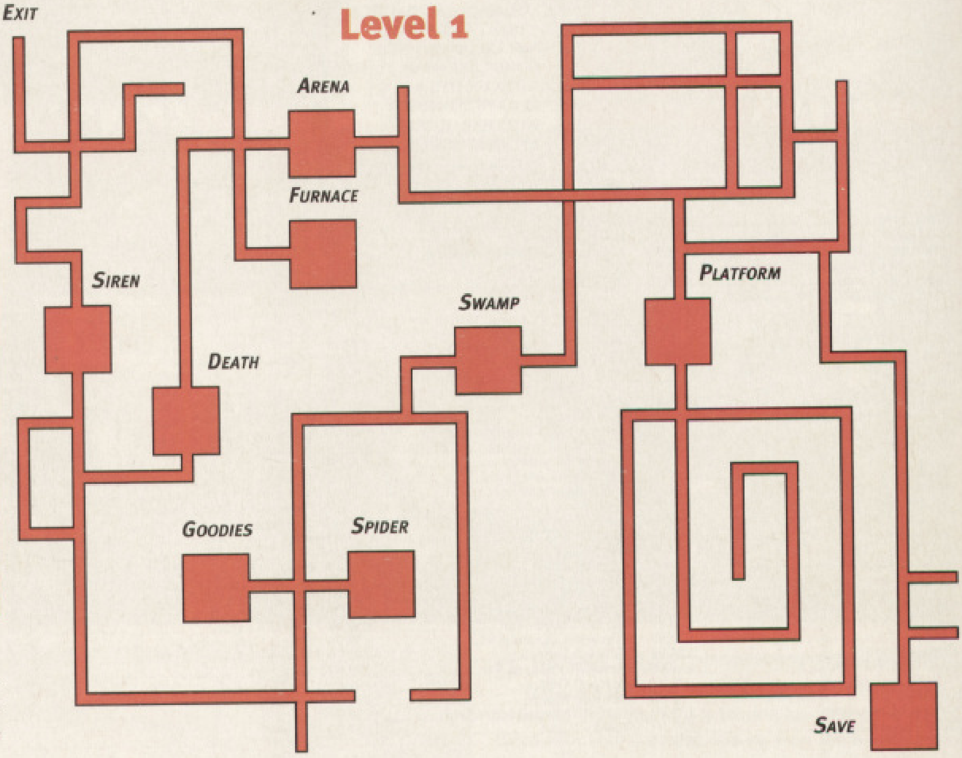
Finding those pizza pieces can be very frustrating. Being the utter bastions of excellence that we are, we've compiled a stress-relieving player's guide.

Litil *Divil*



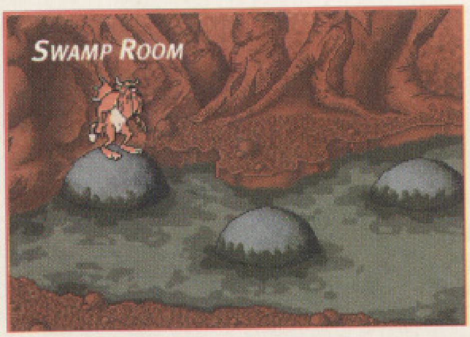
LEVEL 1

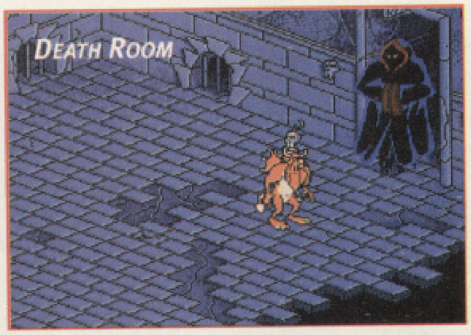

Spider Room

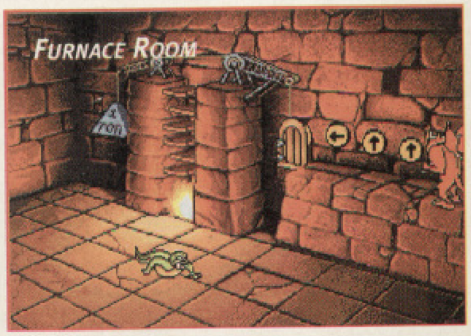

Exit
Level 1
Arena
Furnace
Siren
Platform
Swamp
Death
Goodies
Spider
Save

The Spider Room

With the bugspray from the shop, stand right next to the spider's head and hit Fire as quickly as possible. It's head should explode before the little spiders get to you.






Furnace Room

The Swamp Room

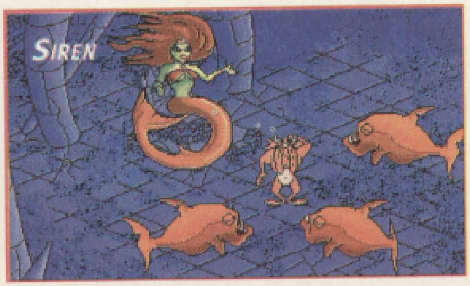
Wait for the first rock to submerge before jumping. If you time it right you'll be able to leap right through the level.

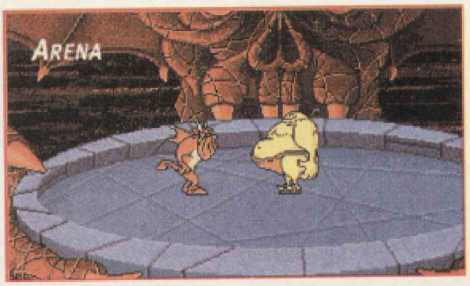
The Siren

Each fish spews out a different symbol when you jump on it and all you have to do is repeat the sequence the Siren tells you.

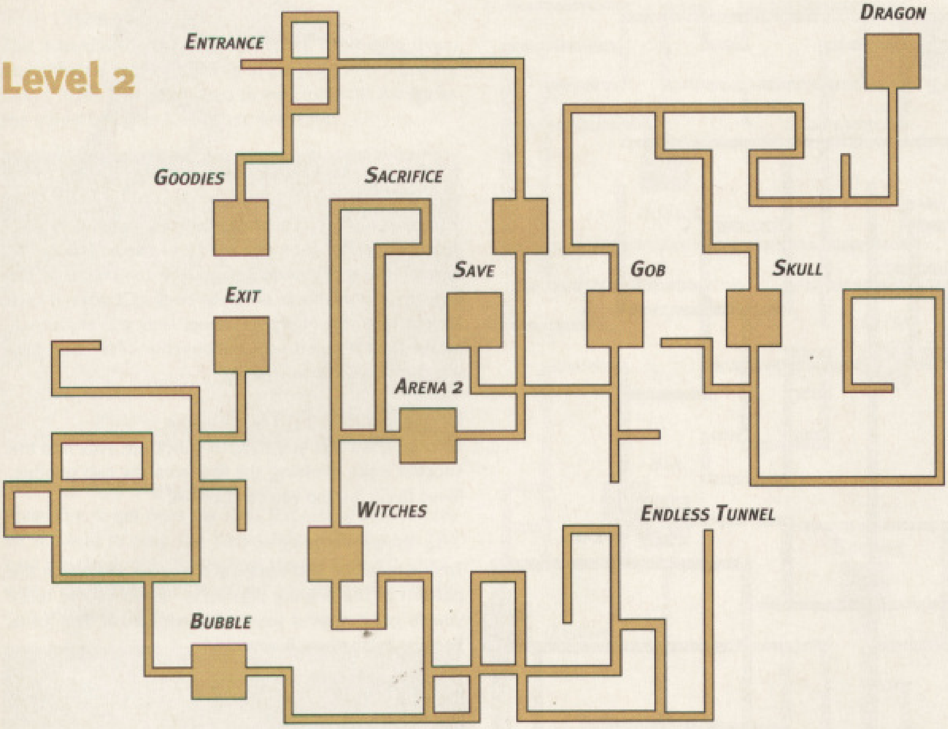
The Death Room

Run up to Death and smack him with your stick. A skeleton will appear which has to be killed. Repeat the process three times to complete the room.





Level 2


ENTRANCE
DRAGON
GOODIES
SACRIFICE
SAVE
GOB
SKULL
EXIT
ARENA 2
WITCHES
ENDLESS TUNNEL
BUBBLE

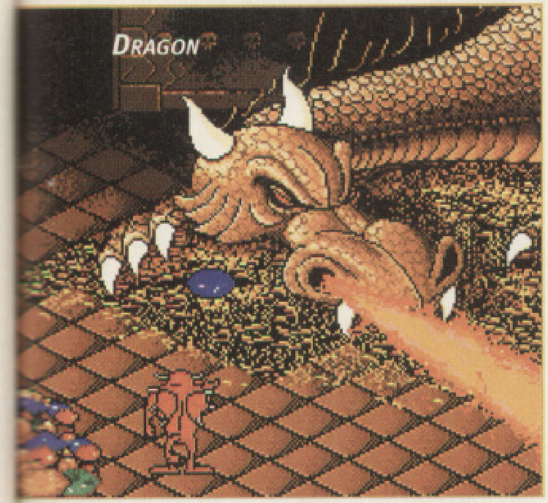
The Dragon

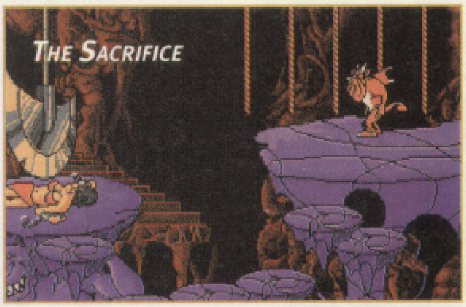
Rather weird this. To stop the dragon breathing fire you need to block its nostrils by tossing gems up them. The only way to do this is by lining yourself up underneath the nostrils. They only stay blocked for a few seconds, so you have to work fast.

The Skull Room

The aim here is to play the game with the Demon. Watch the skull the Demon puts the eyeball underneath, keep track of it and choose it when he's switched them around. He only moves two at a time, so it's relatively easy.

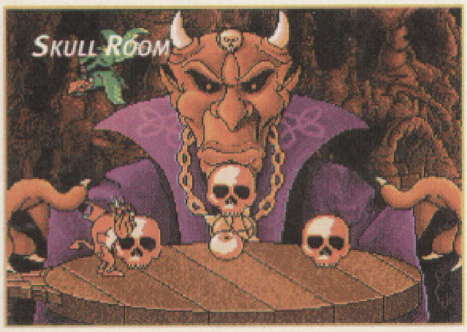
LEVEL 2



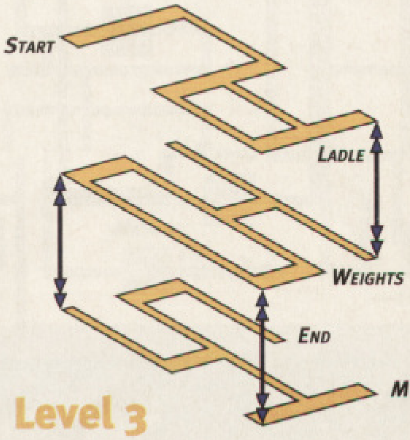

THE SACRIFICE

The Witches

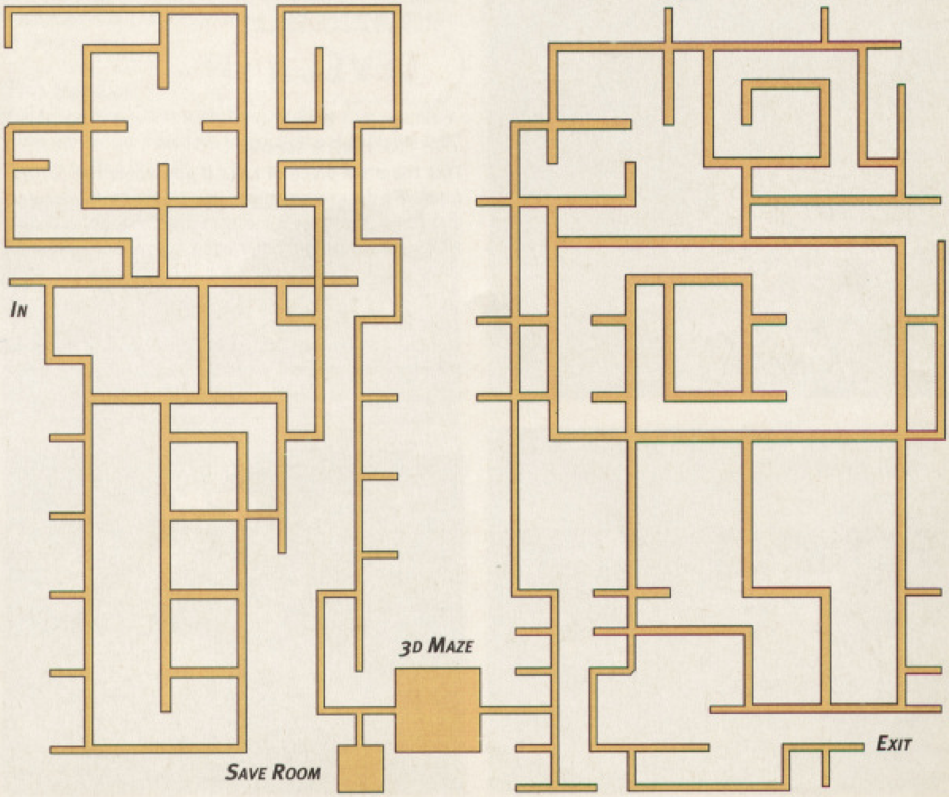
To complete this room you need to drop the Red, Green and Blue potion bottles into the cauldron., then walk over to the bubbling mix and press the Fire button. Simple, really.

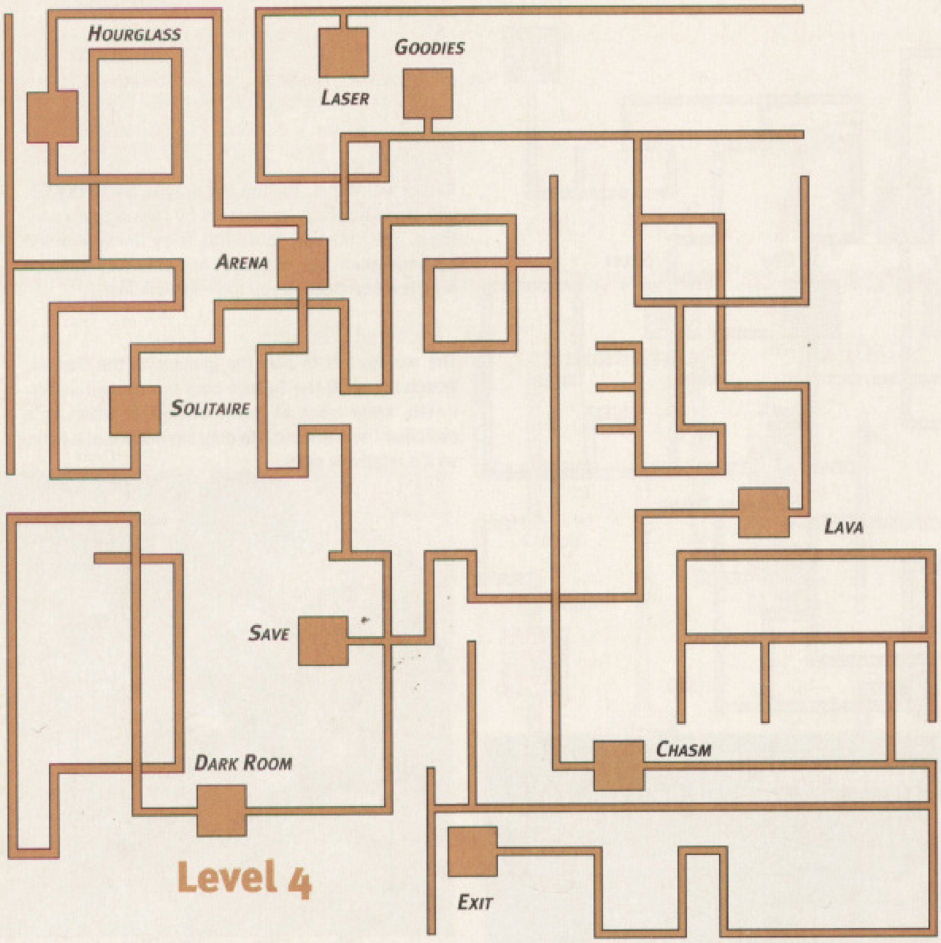


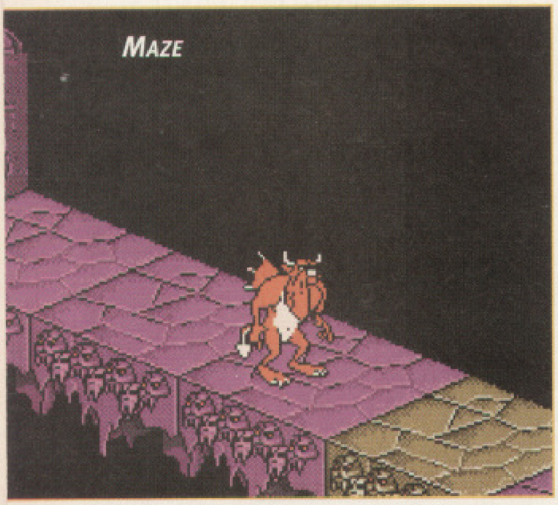
LEVEL 3

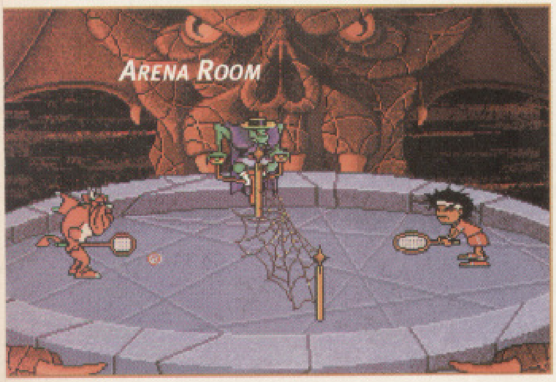

START
LADLE
WEIGHTS
END
MUG

Level 3


IN
3D MAZE
SAVE ROOM
EXIT







There's only one challenge on this level, and that's a simple maze. Follow the map and you'll have no trouble getting through it.

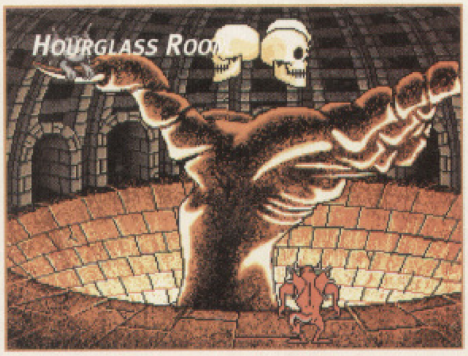
LEVEL 4

The Solitaire Room

This room's a piece of cake if you know the correct route. We do, and so do you now. Move Mutt left twice and forwards. You'll slide backwards, so go forwards twice, left five times, and keep going forwards until you leave the level.

The Chasm Room

To open the door on the screen you have to jump on the platforms with the switches. The key here is moving just after the first shot is fired. If you get caught out you can duck out of harm's way by pressing Fire.



The Arena Room

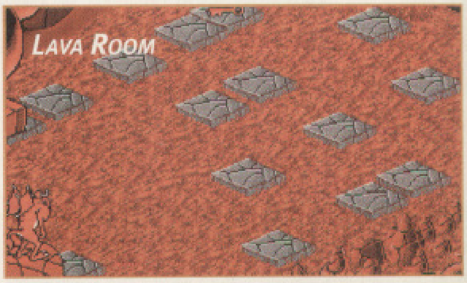
It's tennis on this level and to take part you need the racket from the the laser room. The type of swing you need depends on the colour of the ball, there's only three different ones so it doesn't take long to learn the shots you need. Timing is important, however, as it determines the direction of the ball. Five direct hits will win the match.

The Hourglass Room

To clear this room you have to chuck the eyes into the sockets while avoiding the fire from the two goblins. Move in circles and you can't be hit.

The Laser Room

Take a breather at the start of the room and watch the pattern of the moving platforms. When you've think you've got it sussed you can bomb across. The route back is the same, only reversed.



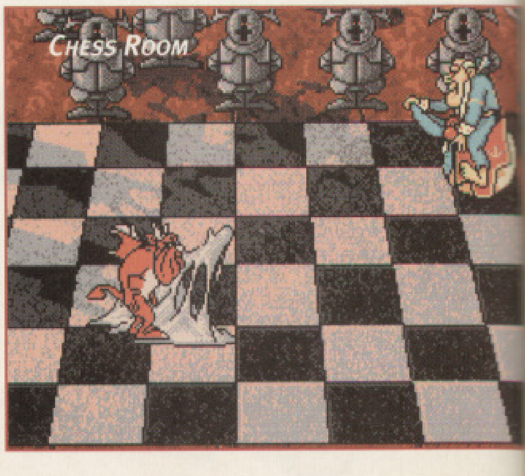
The Lava Room

This is just like Frogger, only tougher. You don't have much time to think, and often the best way to get through is simply to put your head down and bomb across. You have to get the key to open the exit.

The Dark Room

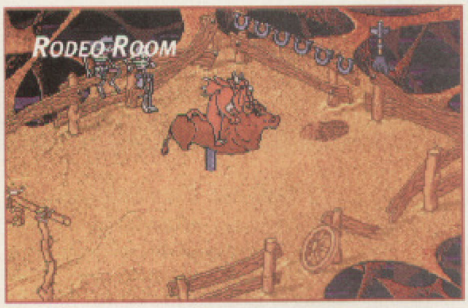
To change the positions of the platforms you need to move the switch squares. Keep out of the way of the ghost, who'll try to drag you under. The squares with the moons on are the entrance and exits. The correct exit is the one on the far left.

LEVEL 5



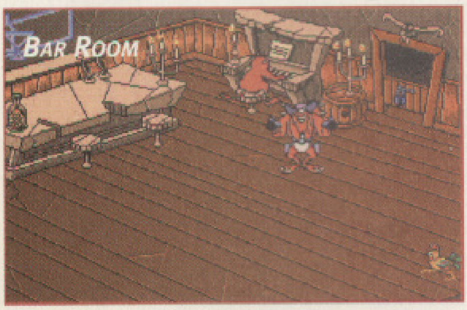
The Chess Room

The man chasing you can only move in straight lines, so confound him by running in zig zags and dropping mines in his path. You need to anticipate his moves as the mines take five seconds to detonate.



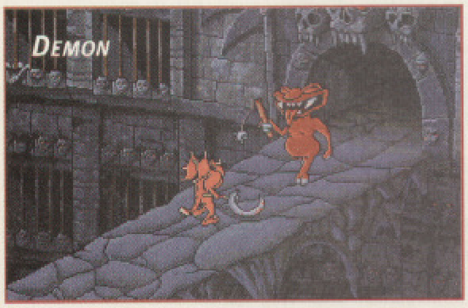
The Rodeo Room

Press Fire to get onto the bull. The aim here is to stay on the bull to stop the horseshoes lighting up. The best way to do this by rotating the joystick anti-clockwise. Eventually Mutt leaps off and the skeletons will give you their guns.



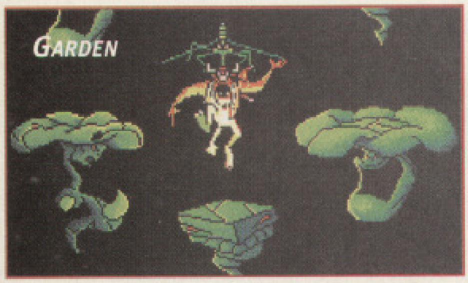
The Bar Room

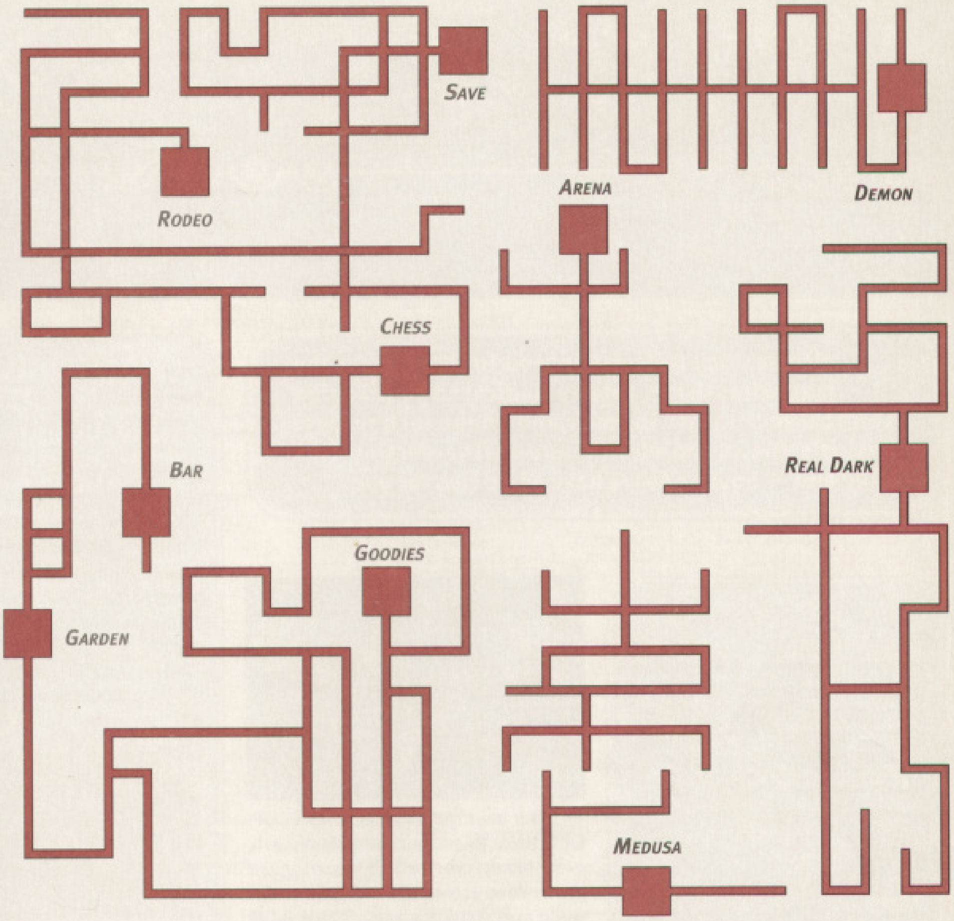
There's not much to do here other than shoot the skeletons, kill the barman and avoid the holes in the floor. For added jollity shoot the piano player.



The Demon

Run along the backbone path and press Fire just before you reach the trampoline. This should bounce you onto it so you can smash the monster's teeth. Don't stand still on this stage or you'll be caught by the creatures underneath.





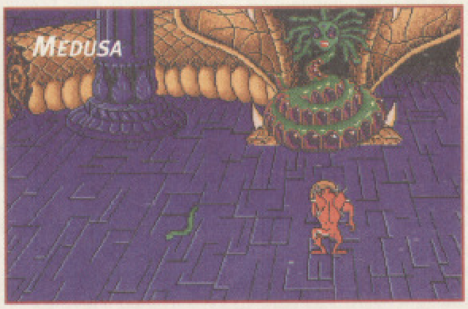
Level 5

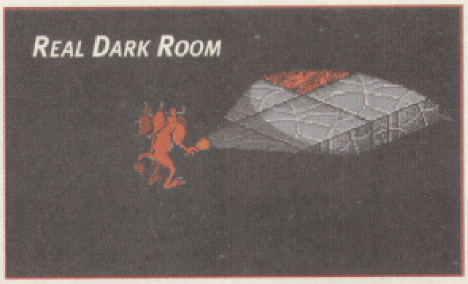
The Arena

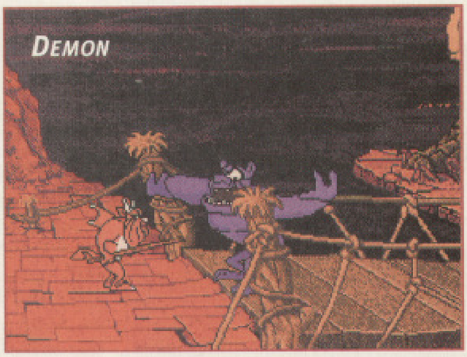
You need to land six hits on the swordsman to kill him. You can't rush this as he'll normally tag you first if you push forwards carelessly. Hang back and wait for him to come to you.

The Garden

Water the first plant with the watering can you were given earlier on. You have to go all the way to the left, then up to find the exit.







The Medusa

Just like the myth, you have to use the shield. This time you're trying to deflect her fireballs back into here. Stand just beneath her in the centre of the screen for the best results.

The Real Dark Room

You have to use the torch to find your way forwards. Be extra careful as it only illuminates a very small part of the screen. This is just like the Dark Room, although larger. The exit's near the top of the screen.

cheat lab

Welcome. Yes, welcome indeed to the page of the magazine that's totally dedicated to bringing you the very latest in hack and cheat technology. Yes, it's the round-off-the-end-of-the-section tips page and — boy! — do we have some tips for you...

Civilization

Who can forget that great and timeless game Civilization? You know — Civilization? The one with the little soldiers and the boats and the... Oh, never mind. Anyway, for those of you who are struggling against the Mongols and the Romans, try employing this little hack-ette to boost your finances.

Using DEBUG create two files in the Civilization games directory called **CIVHACK.SCR** and **CIVHACK.BAT** The contents of **CIVHACK.BAT** should read:

```
@echo off
DEBUG CIVIL0.SVE < CIVHACK.SCR > NUL
```

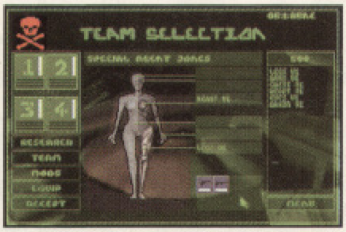
The contents of **CIVHACK.SCR** should read thus:

```
L
E 23F
25 FF
W
Q
```

Now go into Civilization and start playing. Whenever your cash dips close to zero save your game in the FIRST save game slot. Now exit Civilization, type **CIVHACK** and load the game back up again. Restore your saved game and — hey-presto and alakazam! — you've got more cash than you can shake a Colossus at.

Syndicate

Bullfrog's game of corporate conflagration can get a bit tough in the later missions, so you might want to make things a little easier for you and your agents. So if cheating's your game try typing in the following company names.



Enter your company name as COOPER SQUAD to get bucketloads of cash, every bionic/cybernetic bodypart under the sun and access to every level on the world map. Enter the name ROB A BANK to get lots of money. If you want to speed time up enter the name WATCH THE CLOCK while typing in NUK THEM brings dead team members back to life. Marvellous, huh?

Alien Breed

The corridors are dark, your heart is pounding with a thump, thump, thump. There are slime-dripping aliens around every corner and the time is fast running out... Alien Breed was a huge smash on the Amiga but, to be frank, it was a bit crap on the PC. But for those of you who bought the game and still haven't finished it, here are those all-important level codes.

LEVEL 2	AAJIHGDDC
3	CGGHDGGDG
4	HDICICCII
5	IDHEHDGCC
6	IJIIDIHEC
7	CFDFEFEFJ
8	JIIJIIIIC
9	AAAABAAAA
10	CCGDGBBBB
11	HHIAAJJIG
12	GGDDJJHFD
13	JIECBFGFF
14	HGGEDDCCB
15	HHHGFGDCC
16	IHDCHGHFF

Litil Divil

Okay, so you've been beavering away through our playguide but you're an impatient person, right? You want to beat the game quickly, not trudge through level after level. It's nothing to be ashamed of, we here at PC GAMES understand what you're going through and we're here to help. So sit back, relax and memorise these nifty little Litil Divil cheats.

Before starting the game by typing DIVIL in the game directory you can type in the following codes.

divil KmCiNpOcKeT
Press the F1 key to skip a level
divil Nicole
Press Shift + P to walk through a room.
divil MEANING
Press Shift + T for extra energy.
divil Donkey
Press T for extra treasure
divil Grumpy
Press K for extra keys.

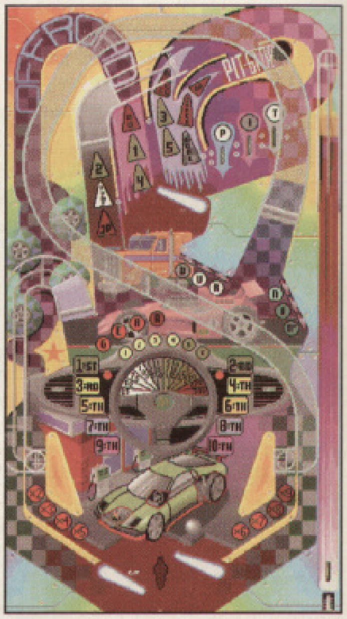
Alone in the Dark 2

Dying is easy in Alone 2, so how would you like to be virtually indestructible? Here's how you do it. When you finally make it into the house, collect the poison from the kitchen (next to the dumb waiter) and the poison from the work surface. Now make the poisoned wine and drink it.

While you do this hold down RETURN until the bottle returns to your inventory. Your hit points will now be a deathly -1000. Repeat the above process until the minus disappears and you will be left with about 32,000 hit points. Sounds crazy, I know — but it works.

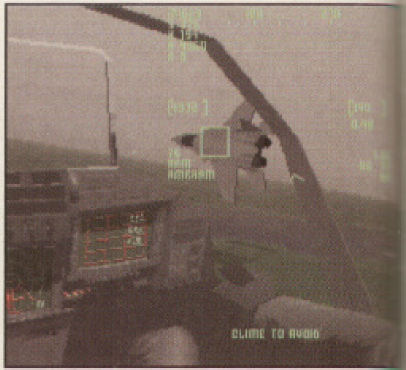
Pinball Fantasies

If you're having trouble being a pinball wizard, try typing in the following when the chosen table is moving up and down between games. Type in EARTHQUAKE and you'll disable the table tilt and if you type in EXTRA BALLS you'll be rewarded with seven balls.



TFX

There can be no doubt that TFX is the ultimate flight sim (that'll be £5 for the gratuitous plug please, Ocean. Ta very much) but it can be really annoying if your pilot gets killed and you're forced to do the training missions again. Thankfully you can skip them by holding down CTRL + ENTER after typing in your callsign. Oh, and for total invulnerability try typing PLOP.



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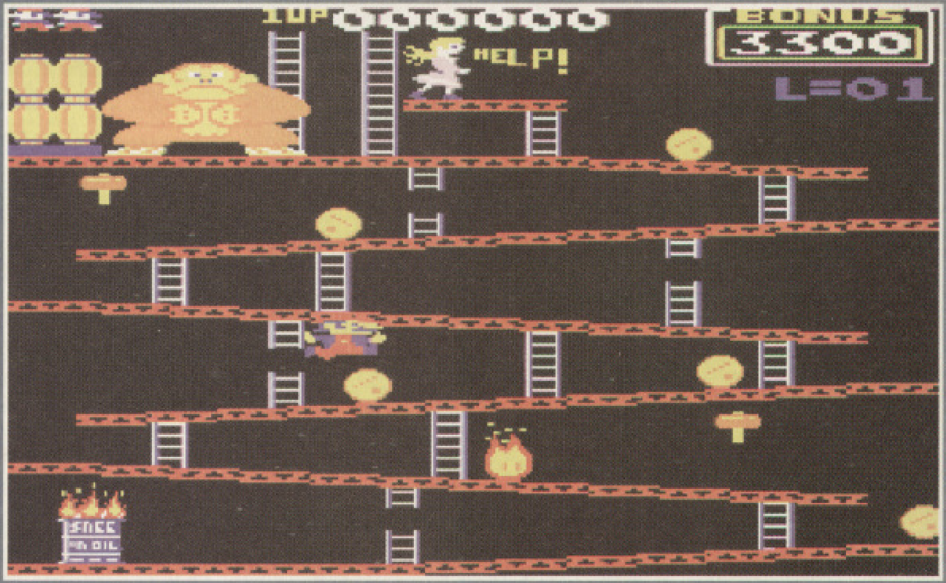
From tiny acorns...

Where did power-ups come from? ***Who*** was Super Mario's great-great-grandfather? ***What*** was the first flight simulator? Powerful majicks and obscene rituals were performed at the **PC GAMES** office to summon back from the dead one of the country's earliest and most respected gameplayers...



Yes! I'm back!

I, the White Wizard, scourge of single-colour non-animated sprites in the early 80s, destroyer of Klingons in the late 70s, supreme commander of the Lunar Lander in the years before, a hunter of Wampi, a Ponger of Pongs and an insane Dictator of Bananadom.

Of course, to many of today's gameplayers, this litany of triumph means absolutely zip-all. So I shall explain all, before my time on this plane expires and I return to my place of rest: as a chartered accountant for a major bean-canning factory in Harlow New Town.

IN THE *BEGINNING*

The first games machines were rather larger than those we use today. They were several feet long, with a keyboard and teletype print-out. There was no monitor. The teletype printed messages prompting you for simple responses; you typed them in (almost always a number); the teletype responded. Today's adventure, simulation and arcade games all began this way.

My first game was a major work of simulation programming, running in slightly less than 1K. It was a version of Lunar Lander, avidly played by my companions in every idle moment. It went something like this (teletype messages in bold, my responses in italics).

First, you had the set-up phase...

Enter Gravity (1-99): *35*
Enter Altitude: *5040*
Enter Fuel Load (1-10): *12*
ERROR
Enter Fuel Load (1-10): *8*
Press Key To Start

After messing around with various combinations of gravity, altitude and fuel you hit the button to start the Lander's descent . Gameplay consisted of continually typing in values for THRUST to slow the Lander's progress moonwards. Use too much thrust and you ran out of fuel. Use too little and you crashed. The computer kept you informed of the craft's altitude and rate of descent. If it reached 0,0 without saying CRASH! you had won the game.

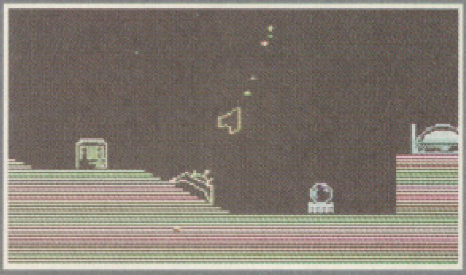
Thanks for the history lesson, pops. But so what? What has this pathetic exercise in computer science got to do with completing my next mission in X-Wing?

More than you might imagine, pipsqueak. People today often comment on the broad similarity of certain types of game. We have recognisable categories — sims, RPGs, beat-'em-ups — and within each category the occasional flash of innovation.

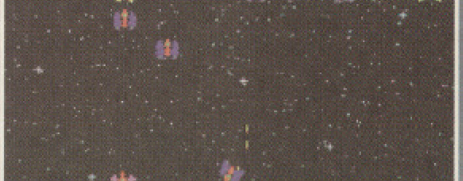
But how did those categories evolve? Why is startling innovation so rare, especially when gameplaying is such a young art? The answer to these questions lies in the past. Yesterday's great games tell us a lot about today's. And about tomorrow's.

EARLY *LIFEFORMS*

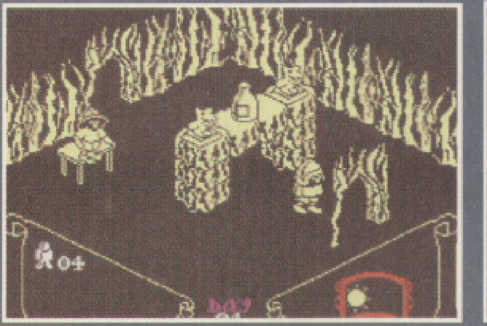
By the end of the 70s, four great apes of computer gaming were standing on their hind legs and sniffing each other's bottoms (an important activity, as we shall see in a moment). Lunar Lander was one; the other three were Star Trek, Adventure, and a game that appeared in a variety of guises but later became known as Dictator (the title of an early commercial version). All games we play today show the clear influence of these ancestors.

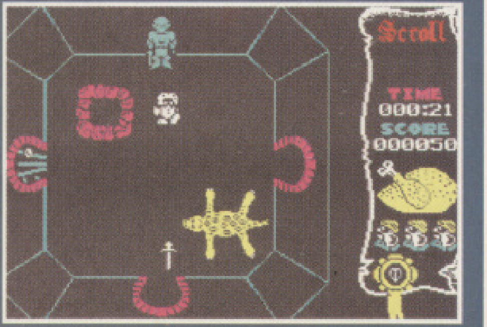


(Top) Modern games like Zool don't really offer anything that you couldn't find in old 80s' classics like Donkey Kong.
(Above) Thrust on the ZX Spectrum, an inspired blend of Lunar Lander and Asteroids.
(Below) Galaga was one of the many coin-ops that expanded on the basic premise of Space Invaders. It was also one of the first games to boast power-ups.



(Below) Ultimate Play The Game had a string of hits that even Take That would envy. It was success well deserved; their games were original, innovative yet always phenomenally playable. Remember Knight Lore (left) or Atic Atac (right) on the Speccy?





Adventure was a sophisticated form of a much earlier game called Hunt The Wampus. In Wampus, you typed N(orth), S(outh), E(ast) or W(est), moving from one chamber to another within a maze. There no descriptions of the chambers, but finally you'd enter one that was inhabited by the Wampus. You then kicked ass by typing F (for 'Fight'), if you felt man or woman enough to do so. Otherwise you R(an).

Adventure made a quantum leap by adding descriptions to these chambers, so the process became an exploration of another world rather than simple hide-and-seek. It also introduced a completely new concept: the object, something that you could find, pick up and possibly use later.

The original version of the game began outside a stone cottage, by a stream. You entered the cottage and found some food, a lamp and a key. You then descended into an underground empire that included some once legendary, but now probably forgotten locations. If you remember the MAZE OF TWISTY PASSAGES, ALL THE SAME or THE HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING, then you probably need as many spells to bring you back from the dead as I do.

Adventure was extremely popular and, unlike a program like Lunar Lander, involved a significant element of gameplay. For example, how do you navigate a maze of identical passages. Each location has an identical description and a list of exits, like this:

> **MAZE OF TWISTY PASSAGES, ALL THE SAME**
> **You are in a twisting maze of small passages.**
> **Everything looks the same.**
> **You can go East, West or North.**

If you typed East, for example, you might end up somewhere with an identical description. The exit options are a possible distinguishing characteristic, but they are often the same too. Even worse, the layout of the maze may be illogical: travelling East from one room and then West from the next may not take you back to the one you started from.

Many lanterns ran out of oil in the Twisty Maze. The only solution was to collect as many objects as you could outside the maze, then enter it and drop each item in a different location. Each location could then be distinguished by the message indicating the object's presence and you could map the maze.

Another early game (later christened Dictator after an early commercial version) involved typing in values for government expenditure and taxes. Depending on how you balanced your budget, the program gave you a popularity rating.

Star Trek was to become the most popular. This was partly because of the unofficial license it enjoyed from the TV show, but also because it was better suited to graphical display than the other titles. Lander, Adventure and Dictator all thrived in a text-only environment, and Star Trek started off in the same way.

But once affordable home micros appeared in the late seventies with video adaptors for monitors, graphic representation became more important. Star Trek was able to display a primitive map of known space and — in the more sophisticated versions — sliding bars to indicate warp speed, shield strength and so on.

Thus the great apes of computer gaming evolved. Lander was the grand-parent of all simulations; Dictator of all strategy and God games; Adventure of all adventures, RPGs, and fantasy games; and Star Trek of all arcade games. So what happened next?

CUE SOUND, *VISION ON*

Ever since Pong and Computer Space had appeared in the arcades at the beginning of the 70s, the coin-op games market had gone from black-and-white tennis games to the likes of Space Invaders, PacMan, and Frogger.

These games had one simple characteristic that distinguished them from computer games: however clever you were, you couldn't run them on a machine without graphics. Imagine trying to take a Lunar Lander approach to Space Invaders, for example. It can't be done. The image, the sound and the hand-eye coordination are what the game is all about.

The story of the next ten years is all about the slow convergence of computer and arcade games (significantly called video games: the visual element was all-important). Computer games began to use graphics and sound; video game designs, when implemented on home computers, began to benefit from more diverse control methods.

Games like Lander and Adventure had two important characteristics: they were written by programmers for other programmers (because the only people who had computers in those days used them to program) and the games themselves were not copyrighted.

Every time you got a new program, you tinkered with it and added your own bells and whistles. This encouraged a process of experimentation, whereby Lander, for example, eventually grew into a vastly more complex beast than the example described earlier, with all sorts of random hazards, winds, ballast considerations and so forth enhancing the basic idea.

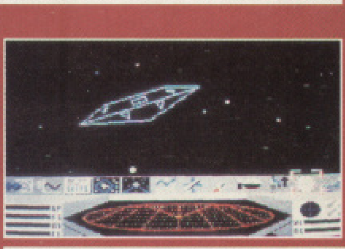
This inclination to experiment and adapt took wings in 1980, 1981 and 1982. These years saw the launch of the Sinclair ZX80, ZX81 and Spectrum. Suddenly, programmers could not only develop larger games, but they could also use graphics, colour and even primitive sound.

All hell broke loose. By 1982, games were being sold in bucketfulls. The average price of a game on cassette for the Acorn Atom and Sinclair machines was around six pounds. This rose to an average of £7.50 by 1983 and stayed at that level until 1987 and the advent of 16-bit products.

Graphics and sound were new toys, so for a while most of the 8-bit games were unashamed copies of

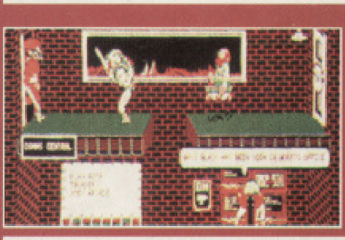
TEN YEARS, TEN MILESTONE GAMES 1984-93

1984
Elite
Firebird



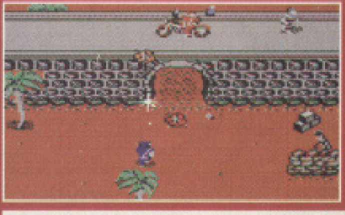
3D space trading, strategy, combat tactics, docking procedures... Have you played a space game recently that didn't owe a debt of allegiance to this masterpiece, created on the BBC micro by David Braben? It's fair to say that Origin's recent hit Privateer is nothing more than Elite with loads of bells and whistles bolted onto it.

1985
Brataccas
Psygnosis



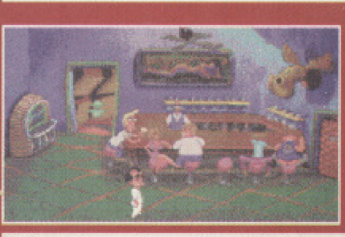
The dawn of the oft-imitated Psygnosis experience, which is now the company that drives a whole new generation of games technology following its acquisition by Sony. Roger Dean packaging, 16-bit graphics and sound — and all at a time when most people hadn't even heard of the Atari ST it ran on. At the time people thought games couldn't get any better.

1986
Commando
Capcom



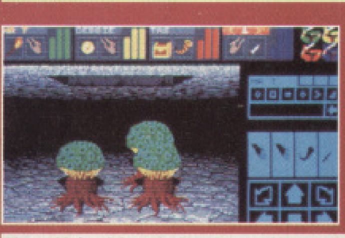
The apotheosis (or the pits — we'll let you decide which) of the 8-bit license market. Licensed properties, from the arcades, from film, and from books, peaked with Commando and went downhill thereafter. Now that CD offers more advanced multimedia potential, perhaps licenses will recover some of their former glory.

1987
Leisure Suit Larry
Sierra On-Line

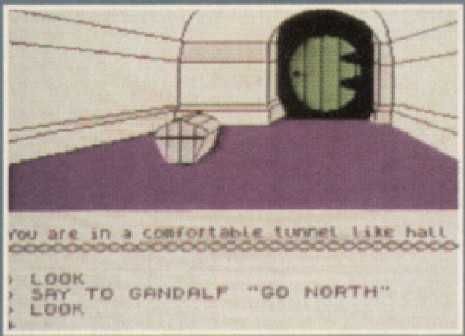


Daft animated adventure, much pirated by businessmen and perhaps solely responsible for launching the PC games market in Britain. Simultaneously made it clear that games weren't just for little boys; they were for older little boys as well. Still popular today; incredibly, the game recently spawned its *fifth* sequel.

1988
Dungeon Master
MirrorSoft

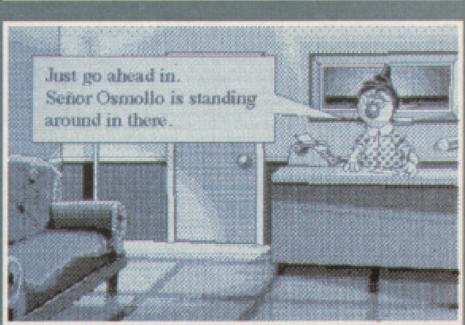


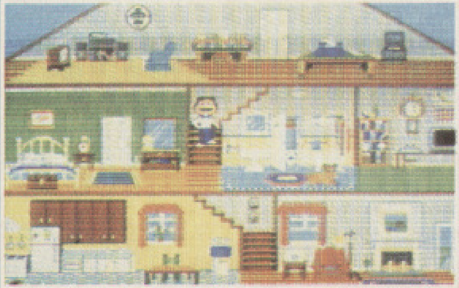
The 16-bit breakthrough. Stunning graphics, stunning gameplay, diverse scenario: a new age of adventure and RPG. Underworld, Wolfenstein, Doom: they all owe a debt to DM, created by a whacky team in a small office just north of San Diego, who are now, apparently, working on Dungeon Master 2.

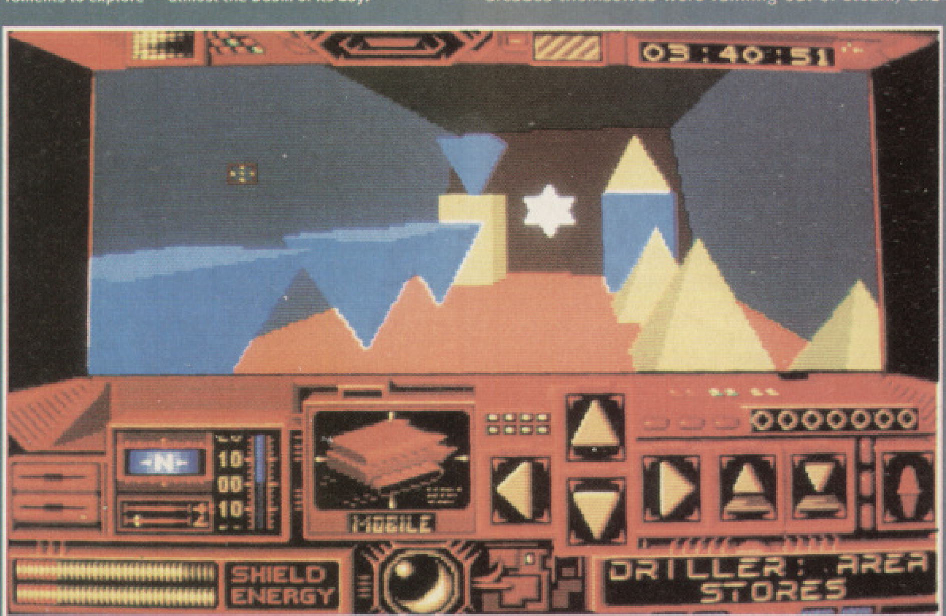


You are in a comfortable tunnel like hall

> LOOK
> SAY TO GANDALF "GO NORTH"
> LOOK







(Top) The Hobbit on the ZX Spectrum combined static colour graphics with — gasp! — 'intelligent' NPCs, if you can call sitting down and singing about Gold intelligent.
(Above middle) Cosmic Osmo on the Macintosh, one of the first 'hypergames'.
(Above) Little Computer People from Activision; not so much a game, more a way of life. (That's it. You're nicked, son — The Cliché Police.)
(Below) Incentive's Driller created interactive, solid-3D enviroments to explore — almost the Doom of its day.

arcade games. Just as the four great apes of computer games established four families, so too did apes of the arcades arise and mingle with their cousins.

Space Invaders begat Galaxians, gaining colour and varying alien attack patterns; Asteroids was probably the result of a brief affair between Invaders and the computer-based Lander; pinball machines wandered into town, mated with PacMan and gave birth to Donkey Kong (which, incidentally, was meant to be called Monkey Kong, but someone in Japan got their animals mixed up).

Most of these games were single-screen affairs, but once machines became powerful enough to scroll the display we got Scramble. Your space craft navigated horizontally-scrolling caverns, bombing fuel-dumps for extra time (the second power-up: the first had been the pills in PacMan).

Struck by a mutant gene, Scramble metamorphosed into Defender. This game was revolutionary, introducing ideas from the old computer game Star Trek as well as a host of new ones. The long-range scan was given graphical representation, so that you could see enemies off-screen; aliens abducted tiny humanoids; you could fly back and forth across the landscape at will (Scramble had been a forced-scroll game); the sound effects were deafening. Some indication of how slowly the game market has developed may be had when you realise that a good 16-bit version of Defender would probably still sell well today.

Otherwise, the two most important games of this period, both later copied on home computers, were Frogger and Battlezone. Frogger, which involved a small amphibian crossing a highway avoiding trucks, was feted on account of its excellent sound track. The Fat Man (composer of Wing Commander and 7th Guest scores) and his kind owe a great debt to Frogger.

Battlezone was the first 3D environment game, in which a small window looked out (ostensibly via a periscope) on to a 3D world composed of jaggy mountains in the distance, triangles, cubes and tanks, all sketched out in green lines. It had excellent sound effects that supported the game mechanics: shelter behind a cube, for example, and you knew you were safe when you heard the enemy's shells clanging against the other side.

GETTING IT *TOGETHER*

By the end of 1983, programmers were getting over their infatuation with the arcades (partly because the arcades themselves were running out of steam) and had begun to experiment more intensively with their computers, using the benefits of the keyboard (to give more complex commands) and the cassette player (to store a game so that you could come back to it later). These two simple refinements were combined with arcade concepts to launch a new wave of interactive entertainment on which we still surf today.

The descendants of Adventure were the most procreative apes in this particular jungle. At the most basic level, text-based games continued to appear, getting more and more complex. Then graphics were added, to create a format called graphic adventures . These were horribly primitive illustrations, however, and took ages to draw.

More interestingly, some programmers sought to create graphical locations which you could move around in. This genre became known as the arcade adventure and the best early example was Atic Atac. Each screen showed a room with exits, some locked. Objects (including keys and potions) could be collected by the little warrior you controlled. All the time, in true arcade fashion, you dealt death to the ghostly sprites of the haunted mansion you were exploring.

Atic Atac was one of many games which borrowed from a popular arcade game called Robotron. This overhead view game gave you a character who could move in four directions, blasting robots that chased you round a maze. Robotron was enormously influential and its game-style is still evident today in games like Cannon Fodder from Sensible.

If 1983 had been the year of the home computer arcade conversion, 1984 was definitely a golden year of innovation. Four titanic games heralded the apotheosis of 8-bit games and set their seal on gameplay styles that exist to this day. These were Elite, Kung Fu, Jet Set Willy, and Valhalla.

Elite blended Star Trek, Lander, Adventure, and Dictator with the graphic 3D representations of Battlezone and Atari's Star Raiders to produce a space-trading matrix that still gives us titles like Wing Commander. Kung Fu was the grand-daddy of beat-'em-ups; its most famous son was probably System 3's International Karate — a game that became, in later guise, the first British game to top the US game charts.

Jet Set Willy was derived from an earlier American title called Miner 2049er. An arcade adventure, it boasted Kong-ish platform strategy, geographical and timing puzzles that still form the backbone of many of today's console games. Valhalla combined text adventure commands and responses with an display of the world and the characters within it. Although the text commands have been replaced by icon control, there is nothing in Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis that you can't find in Valhalla.

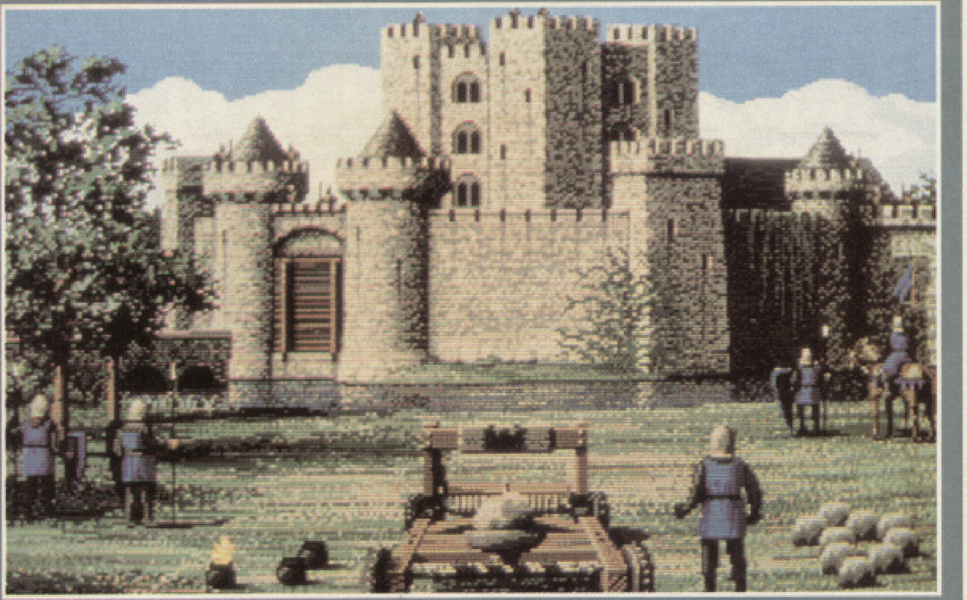
It's a sobering thought that there are no games around today that cannot, in one way or another, be traced directly to gameplay ideas evolved either before or during 1984. So what's been going on since?

MORE POWER, *HIGHER PRICES*

Although Sinclair had launched the more powerful QL in 1984, it had been let down by late delivery and an awkward storage device (the Microdrive dedicated cassette). The next most important step was to machines with disk drives (more space and faster than cassettes), more powerful processors and better graphics and sound. The first hints came in 1985 with the launch of the Atari ST.

Two games gave some indication of what as to come. A new company called Psygnosis produced Brataccas for the Atari ST: people were stunned by the size of the sprites, the number of colours on-screen and the graphic resolution. Then came The Pawn from Magnetic Scrolls: a text-and-graphics adventure with excellent high-resolution images.

(Below) Even way back in 1987 software companies were attempting to create 'interactive movies'. US developers Cinemaware got closer than most with games like Defender Of The Crown (shown), Rocket Ranger and It Came From The Desert.



It was three years, however, before 16-bit gaming really made its mark. No new game styles appeared during this period, although 8-bit programmers were finally mastering solid 3D. 1986 saw a slow increased in the popularity of icons, finally replacing text commands in games that required more than simple directional control. The American company ICOM produced a series of graphic adventures with icon commands that were particularly notable in this area.

1987 was a crucial year for PC gamers, however. PCs were already very popular in offices and had recently gained first CGA and then EGA graphics. Sierra produced Leisure Suit Larry which was pirated in vast quantities throughout the UK. For the first time, people began to associate the PC with playing games, though it was to take six years for hardware prices and aspirations to finad a common ground.

By the end of 1987, 16-bit machines were beginning to show that increased power could open up new avenues. Universal Military Simulator (UMS) from Rainbird showed what could be done with wargaming if you had the power to combine massive statistical operations with a graphical interface.

Incentive had proved, with their Freescape system, that solid 3D was a workable environment for 8-bit machines and an even stronger proposition for the Amiga and the ST. And 16-bit meant better sound too: games like Xenon flexed the ear in a way that Frogger could only have dreamed of.

And, of course, games got more expensive. 16-bit meant higher development costs and by the end of 1987 even 8-bit games were costing an average of ú10; 16-bit games were still coming in under £20, but the £24.99 price point wasn't far off.

THE *FINAL STRETCH*

The 16-bit breakthrough finally came, in gameplay terms, in 1988. In unconscious homage to the original Adventure, Dungeon Master showed us a world of monsters, role-playing and 3D incarceration. On the action side, Interceptor took solid 3D to the skies.

The PC began to demonstrate one huge advantage: its standard hard-disk format meant that large games could be installed from several disks and the drive used as virtual memory. Sierra games were the first to capitalise on this, using the system for increased graphic content. Other games offered increased mission options, massive worlds to explore, or even early digitised sound-tracks.

The first new game format to rely almost entirely on the increased memory of 16-bit machines arose in 1990. Manhole, an obscure title from a brother-and-brother outfit in the States, was essentially a child's plaything on the Macintosh. There was no plot, no arcade action. All you did was look at pictures of places and click the mouse on anything that seemed interesting. If you were lucky, you either got a sound bite, a message, or possibly a route to a new location.

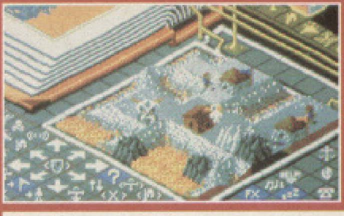
Manhole was followed by Cosmic Osmo and the game format was finally taken up in a big way by Broderbund in 1992 with their Living Books titles. Christened hypergames, because of the parallels with hypertext (a document browsing system that you control with the mouse pointer), this genre is arguably the only entirely new game format to have arisen since 1984. It's perhaps significant that it would not be possible without a mouse and large amounts of fast disk storage. New game formats, it seems, are just as reliant on enabling technology as they were in the days of Scramble and sideways scrolling.

Although 8-bit was dying during 1989 and 1990, what it lacked in technology it made up for in programming expertise. Nebulus was a great C64 romp involving platform strategy on a revolving tower; Kick Off was arguably the best football game ever. In its death-throes, the 8-bits' last words were to the effect that gameplay is always more important than presentation.

16-bit programmers today are still trying to live up to that legacy, with varying degrees of success. Outstanding examples of 16-bit gameplay from this period include Prince Of Persia, Wing Commander (another big boost for PC gaming), Secret Weapons Of The Luftwaffe and — by 1991 — Lemmings.

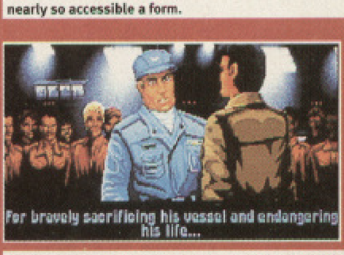
This process might have continued unhindered, as it did with 8-bit, resulting in the development of better gameplay ideas and new scenarios. Unfortunately, the natural evolution of 16-bit programming technology has been temporarily halted by the introduction of CD technology, which places data — graphics, sound, etc — before processor control. Although the first CDi players appeared in development houses in the UK in 1989, we still haven't worked out what to do with them. But that's another story, and not one you'll be hearing from The White Wizard..,

1989
Populous
Electronic Arts



After a false start with the shoot-'em-up Fusion, Populous established Bullfrog as a development team to be reckoned with, and created a whole new game genre into the bargain. All the same, the game's basic gameplay features can be found in much older games like Dictator, although not in nearly so accessible a form.

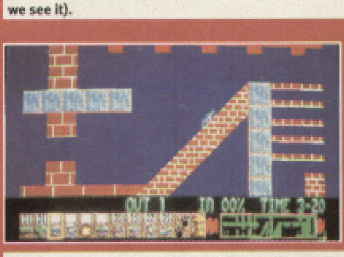
1990
Wing Commander
Origin



For bravely sacrificing his vessel and endangering his life...

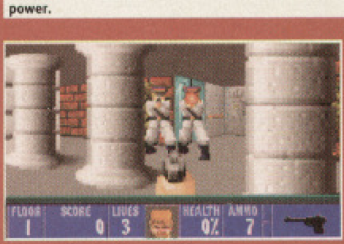
PC gaming gets another tremendous boost with Wing Commander, the game that combined graphics, gameplay, and awesome music to prove that the machine in the office really belongs in the home as well. The second sequel is due at the end of the year (although, this being Origin, we'll believe it when we see it).

1991
Lemmings
Psygnosis



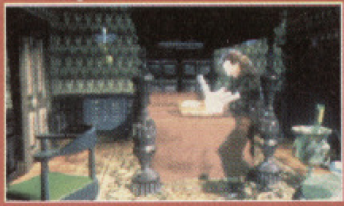
Another hymn to playability, giving the lie to the necessity of massive computing resources. Lemmings runs just as well on a GameBoy as it will doubtless one day run on a super-powered Sony PS-X console. A timely reminder from Psygnosis to developers becoming over-enamoured of 16-bit power.

1992
Wolfenstein 3D
Apogee



Wolfenstein 3D can claim with confidence to have influenced more games than any other over the last couple of years, at least in terms of graphical presentation anyway. As a game it's very limited and could easily have been done on an 8-bit machine, but don't underestimate the mighty power of eye-popping graphics.

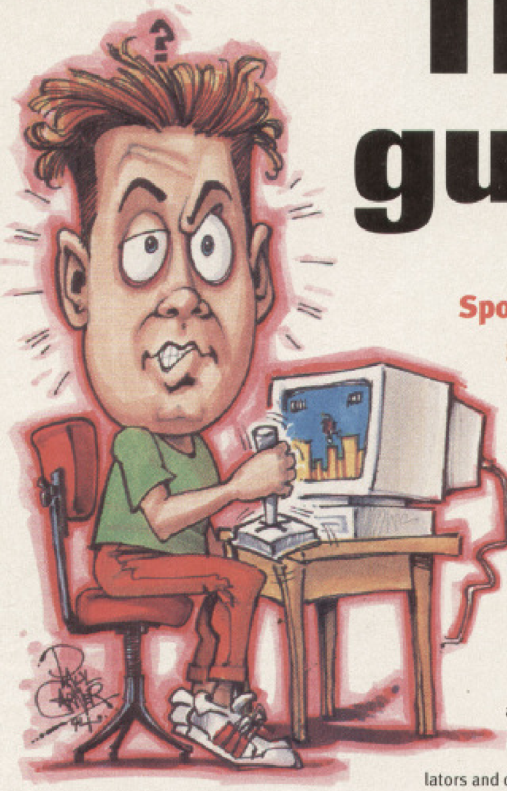
1993
The 7th Guest
Virgin



The first CD-based game to make extensive, although arguably not full, use of the shiny new medium's potential. Trilobyte's The 7th Guest was a visual and aural feast, although its puzzle-related gameplay was limited and essentially simplistic. The sequel, 11th Hour, is due to be released later this year by Virgin.

The complete guide to game jargon

Spout with confidence on any given games-related topic and become the life and soul of dinner parties and social gatherings with this, The Complete Guide To Game Jargon.



ADVENTURE

Adventures were among the earliest form of computer game and were originally text-only. Messages on the screen told you where you were and what you could see, and you played the game by typing in basic English commands such as GET JEWEL AND GO WEST. The closest we have to adventures nowadays are the *graphic adventures* and *RPGs*, where on-screen *characters* explore worlds under *icon* control. The basic concept hasn't changed much, however.

ARCADE GAME

An action game, often based upon a *scenario* taken from the amusement arcades, in which you control an on-screen character, space ship or other entity. Scoring is an important element of arcade games, usually accomplished by shooting aliens, reaching higher levels, collecting treasure or whatever. Reflexes, rather than brainpower, are the key to success.

ATTRIBUTES

Usually refers to '*character* attributes' — the particular skills enjoyed by a character in an *RPG*. Examples are strength, magic power and dexterity. Attribute levels are normally determined before you start play through a combination of chance and choice. Once you start playing, your *characters* increase their scores for each attribute as they grow in experience, enabling them to tackle more demanding situations.

BACKGROUNDS

Graphic backdrops in *arcade games* against which the action takes place. See also *parallax scrolling*.

BUDGET GAMES

Games normally retail for £30 or more. Older titles (or compilations thereof), however, are frequently released 'on budget' at a fraction of their original cost.

CD-ROM

An acronym for Compact Disk Read-Only Memory; a CD with a game on it instead of Nirvana. A CD-ROM can hold up 600Mbs of data, giving ample space for enhanced game graphics and sound. The most striking use of all this space is to store and display compressed video and films on your PC. The latest industry-standard compression systems can hold just over 70 minutes of *full-motion video* on a single CD.

CHARACTER

Characters in games may be under your direct control or looked after by the computer. You can often talk to them, fight with them, even fall in love with them. As a general rule, however, characters are there either as obstacles or as oracles. Treat them accordingly.

CLONE

As in 'Space Invaders clone'. A game that blatantly copies the style of another release. Sadly, plagiarism is common in the games industry, though less so than in the early 80s when almost all games were 'clones' of Japanese coin-ops.

COIN-OP

A game designed for play on a coin-operated unit in an amusement arcade. A coin-op *conversion* is a coin-op *scenario* adapted for play on a PC. Almost all coin-ops are *arcade games*, though some companies have experimented with simulators and others with puzzle games.

CONTROL OPTIONS

Most games provide alternative means of controlling the action — some people prefer using a joystick, some a mouse, some the keyboard. The more control options, the better.

CONVERSION

The re-programming of a game so that it will run on a different computer. The quality of conversion varies — just because a game was a success on the Amiga doesn't mean that it will be as enjoyable on the PC.

DATA DISK

Some games are designed to accept additional *scenarios*. Once you've played through the main story, you can purchase a data disk with a new challenge. Data disks are used in conjunction with the original disks and cost less than buying a new game.

DISK ACCESS

Games need to access lots of information during play. This information is taken from disk but can be stored in memory for faster access. Poor program design, however, may require frequent disk accesses, slowing down the game.

END-OF-LEVEL GUARDIAN

Many *shoot-' em-ups* require you to defeat a particularly hostile enemy at the end of each level.

FLICK-SCREEN SCROLLING

The opposite of *scrolling*. When you move your game figure to the left of the display, the program clears the screen and replaces it with a new display, showing the adjacent location.

FRAME RATE

The speed at which the display is updated. As in cinema, a speed of around 15 frames per second is the slowest frame rate at which action on the screen appears smooth. Games which present complex 3D displays rarely reach this figure; arcade games, with simpler 2D graphics, often exceed it.

GAME ENGINE

The core program that controls a given game's major functions. For example, TFX stunning images are generated by a '3D game engine'.

GRAPHIC ADVENTURE

Now one of the most popular forms of computer entertainment. A map is divided into graphic *locations* and you can see your *character* moving about in response to your commands. Similar to an *arcade game*, but gameplay revolves around puzzle-solving and there are many more commands available. A good example would be LucasArts' Day Of The Tentacle or Sam & Max.

GOD GAME

A generic term for games that simulate complex environments incorporating social, economic and ecological systems, such as the recent smash hit Sim City 2000.

GOURAUD SHADING

This is a way of 'smoothing out' the colour transition across polygons and thus giving a more natural, rounded look to otherwise blocky and rectangular 3D objects.

ICONS

Graphic symbols on-screen that enable you to control the action by clicking on them with the mouse. For example, clicking on a icon with a hand illustrated on it may result in picking up an object.

INTERACTIVE FICTION

Fancy words for *adventure*, used by people who are too ashamed to admit that they play games.

INTERACTIVE MOVIE

Grandiose term applied by games publishers to products they wish to sell more copies of. If such a thing could ever truly exist, it would require gargantuan amounts of storage for all the graphics information.

INVENTORY

List of objects 'held' by the player's *character* during a game.

LEVELS

Usually found in *arcade games*, where the action is divided into successive yet independent phases.

LICENSE

Many publishers seek higher sales by acquiring licenses to well-known names in other media, i.e. Indiana Jones, James Bond, The Terminator, etc. Unfortunately, the cost of the license often means that the development of the game suffers due to lack of funds. May also apply (as in `coin-op license') to the *conversion* of a *coin-op* game to the PC.

LOCATION

In *adventures* the game-world is split up into small areas. The 'current location' is the player's position in the game.

NPC

Short for Non-Player Character and refers to any *character* in a game that is controlled by the computer, not by you.

PARALLAX SCROLLING

Scrolling technique which layers the background of the display according to its imagined distance from the player. Each layer is then scrolled at a different speed, giving a more realistic impression of 'depth' into the screen. In a racing game, for example, the trees beside the road will flash by, but the mountains in the distance will remain almost stationary, just as in real life.

PARTY

Role-playing games (RPGs), popularised by the American board-game Dungeons & Dragons, involve a group of players who each assume a 'role' in the adventure (e.g. that of a warrior or thief). This group is known as a party.

PIXEL

A corrupted truncation of 'picture element'. A pixel describes the tiny coloured dots that together form a monitor's display.

PLATFORM GAME

A common gameplay style, in which the display is divided up into platforms. The player must therefore master the skills of jumping from one platform to another without falling between them and avoid both patrolling monsters and other obstacles. Recent examples are Fire & Ice and Zool.

PLAYABILITY
That magic quality which separates the turkeys from the rest of the flock, this refers to a combination of control method, game mechanics, graphics, sound and originality, all of which conspire to make a game enjoyable to play.

POLYGON
The basic building block for games which depict the action in 3D. Unlike sprites, which are pre-drawn images stored in memory, polygon-based objects are drawn and redrawn several times a second by the computer according to their angle and distance to the viewer.

POWER-UP
A bonus awarded to the player, especially during *shoot-'em-ups*, which results in enhanced game ability (e.g. jumping higher or more powerful weapons). Power-ups are frequently represented on-screen as objects that you have to collect.

RAY TRACING
3D graphics technology that involves the calculation of light patterns on surfaces, thus adding realism. See *rendering*.

RENDERING
Once a 3D artist has constructed a model of a particular object or scene (group of objects), he then defines light sources, texture maps and other criteria. Finally, the scene is rendered: a lengthy process that calculates light paths and reflections and their interaction with textures, surface angles etc, creating a final image that is often photo-realistic.

ROLE-PLAYING GAME (RPG)
Game style which combines the elements of an *adventure* game with the multiple player-character approach of boardgames like Dungeons & Dragons (see *party*). In the computer version, the party of friends is replaced by a party of computer-controlled characters, which you either recruit within the game or create before you start.

SCENARIO
The storyline, environment and objectives of a game. Additional scenarios for use with a game may sometimes be purchased on *data disks*.

SCROLLING
Refers specifically to the scrolling of the display or background in a game. There are three types: 'horizontal scrolling', which moves the image from side to side, most often used in *arcade games* where the character runs along the ground; 'vertical scrolling', where the screen image moves from top to bottom, often used in *shoot-'em-ups* where the aliens descend from above; and 'multi-directional scrolling' where the display constantly moves to reveal new areas, whatever direction you are moving in.

SHOOT-'EM-UP
A classic game genre in which you shoot everything that moves. If it doesn't move, you shoot it until it does.

SIMULATION
Applies to any game that attempts to replicate the workings of a 'real world' situation or vehicle, such as IndyCar Racing or Falcon 3.0.

SPRITE
A mobile graphic element: an alien, for example, or the player *character* itself as it moves around. Most sprites get shot.

STATE OF THE ART
Anything that looks good this month.

STATUS PANEL
Area of the screen giving information about your character's health, the environment or other game features.

STRATEGY
Game-style often dependent on the management of resources, as the player attempts to control an organisation, situation or environment.

TEXTURE MAPPING
Polygon-based objects look more realistic if each surface is shaded with a pattern, giving some indication of the surface's texture: rough, smooth, shiny and so on. These patterns are stored as 'texture maps'.

VOXEL SPACING
A programming technique employed for drawing detailed, realistic 3D landscapes, as seen in games such as Commanche: Maximum Overkill and CyberRace. The only drawback is that the results can look a touch 'blocky' and blurred at times.

The name's Erskine. Christina Erskine. And if you've got a technical problem, I've got a not-so-technical solution. That's why they call me...

THE TROUBLE SHOOTER

This month, Confused of Congleton wrote in asking "Help me TS. I've got no idea what CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files are or what they do."
Fret no longer, Mr Confused; I'm on the case.

Name: CONFIG.SYS & AUTOEXEC.BAT.
Age: As old as the IBM PC itself, i.e. 11 this year.
Address: The root directory, your hard drive.

So, what are they, then?
CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT are two files which are processed every time you switch on your PC. AUTOEXEC.BAT contains commands which precisely configure your PC. CONFIG.SYS contains commands which — in the main — set up your device drivers.

Device drivers?
Anything that has been added to the basic PC box — like a soundcard, a mouse, extra memory chips or a CD-ROM drive — counts as a device for the purposes of the CONFIG.SYS file. Each device needs a driver, i.e. a software file needs to be run which loads up the device so that your PC will recognise it.

So how would I know a device driver if I saw one?
A line in your CONFIG.SYS file which reads something like

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
```

loads up the device driver for extended memory. Look out for the words DEVICE= and then the location of the file.

Anything else in the CONFIG.SYS I should know about?
Yes. If you have extra memory (more than 640K RAM) fitted in the PC, you can load the operating system (DOS) into a 64K space called the high memory area. If you have a line which reads

```
DEVICE=HIMEM.SYS
```

you can add the following line to put DOS into that 64K, and free up lots of lovely memory for your programs:

```
DOS=HIGH,umb
```

That 'umb' at the end of the line stands for 'upper memory blocks', the memory between 640K and 1Mb which you can also load device drivers into. After this line, look for the words DEVICEHIGH= instead of DEVICE=; this command will automatically load the driver into an upper memory block.

A line stating which 'country code' you want to use helps to configure the way the machine displays the time and date — so that the day appears before the month, for example. This line will look something like this:

```
COUNTRY=044,,C:\DOS\COUNTRY.SYS
```

Country=044? Looks more like an international dialling code to me.
Yes. Uncanny, isn't it? Finally, you may have the following two lines in CONFIG.SYS:

```
FILES=20
BUFFERS=20
```

Don't worry too much about what these mean. Some games may want the numbers to be different: 30 files, maybe, or 15 buffers. Just change the numbers as the program suggests and reboot the machine.

Whoah — wait a minute... How the hell do I make changes to this file?
Easy. Just load it into a word processor, or type

```
EDIT CONFIG.SYS
```

at the C:\ prompt. It's only lines of text, you see, so you can change the words or delete or add lines, then save it (press Alt-F then S, if you used EDIT to load it up). Then reboot your PC and the changes you made will take effect.

Suppose I make a mistake and it all goes horribly, horribly, *horribly* wrong?
Ah yes, I forgot. Before you make any changes to your CONFIG.SYS file you should always back it up. Either copy it to a floppy disk:

```
COPY C:\CONFIG.SYS A:
```

or copy it under another name:

```
COPY CONFIG.SYS CONFIG.BAK
```

for instance. Now make the changes to the original CONFIG.SYS and, if it doesn't work, you can always replace the new one with the one you copied earlier.

What about AUTOEXEC.BAT then?
The AUTOEXEC.BAT contains a variety of commands which are automatically executed when you switch the PC on.

Come again?
Oh, all right then. It consists of lines of commands which will tweak things such as the way your C:\ prompt is displayed, the exact layout of your keyboard — so that you get a pound sign when you press Shift-3, for example — and it will define the precise settings for the device drivers loaded in CONFIG.SYS.

What do you mean, "the way the C:\ prompt is displayed"?
Okay, try this: at the C:\ prompt, type the following, exactly as it appears below:

```
PROMPT IT'S NOW $t$_GIVE ME YOUR COMMANDS$_$p$g
```

What you should have now is, instead of boring old C:\, the time, your PC at your service, and the current drive, all on three lines instead of one.

```
$t     displays the time
$_     moves the next text down one line
$p     displays the current drive and directory
$g     displays a '>' sign to separate your now
       over-the-top prompt from your commands.
```

In practice, I think just PROMPT pg is probably enough. If you put that line in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file, in the same way that you alter CONFIG.SYS as explained above, then you will always see which directory you're in at the C:\ prompt.

Now tell me something useful, like more about the precise settings for devices.
No. I wouldn't worry too much about this for the moment, to be honest. When you fit something like a sound card and run the install software that comes with it, 99 times out of 100 the software will automatically add the right lines with the right numbers to CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT. Just leave them be. Especially if the machine came with the devices already fitted and configured.

That's it — I'm outta here. If you've got a problem with your PC then why not write to me at the usual PC GAMES address? In addition, you might be interested to know that when I'm not The Trouble Shooter, I'm the Editor of this mag's sister publication, PC REVIEW. PC REVIEW is the complete guide to PC entertainment, which carries a comprehensive technical help section, covering all aspects of potential PC problems, and which includes a more detailed and technical version of the article above.

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Letters

Hello and welcome
to Letters, the liveliest part of the magazine! And why is it so damn lively? Because it's you, our fun-loving readers, who write it (and not the tired old hacks who churn out the rest of this tome). And the first letter this month concerns...

Oh, we can't fool you,can we? You've spotted that there aren't any letters on this page at all, which instead bears a boring-looking form of the kind the Inland Revenue is so beloved of sending out.

Yes, it's a Reader Survey. You see, this being the first issue 'n' all, we haven't received any mail from readers yet. So, in a desperate attempt to fill up this space, we've decided not to print fawning praise from our industry chums but instead attempt to find out exactly who you are out there in mag-reading land, what you like doing, what you think of PC GAMES and what sort of stuff you'd like to see covered in the future.

And because we know that filling out these things is as much fun as having your leg cut off without anaesthetic, we're sweetening the pill with some FREE - yes, that's correct, I said FREE - software. A bit more interested now, aren't you? Yes, thought you might be...

All the survey forms will be put in a big bucket/hat affair and on July 6th we'll pluck out FIFTY at random. Each of those people will then win a top-quality piece of games software! Hoorah! (By the way, if any of those would-be winners answers 'Yes please!' - snigger! - to the Sex? question then they'll get nothing.)

So get going - you'll find the address to send your forms to (and any other bits of correspondence for that matter) over the page...

THE PERSONAL BITS

1 Sex? (And remember what we said earlier)
Male ☐
Female ☐

2 How old are you?
Under 13 ☐ 13 ☐
14 ☐ 15 ☐
16 ☐ 17-19 ☐
20-23 ☐ 24-29 ☐
30-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐
45-54 ☐ Over 55 ☐

3 What do you do?
At school ☐
6th Form/6th Form College ☐
Higher Education (University, etc) ☐
Full-time employment ☐
Part-time employment ☐
Unemployed ☐
Retired ☐
Other: ....

4 What do you do in your spare time? Please rate how keen you are on each of the following. (10 = very, 1 = don't care less):
Play computer games ☐
Play sports ☐
Watch TV ☐
Watch satellite TV ☐
Watch videos ☐
Listen to music ☐
Listen to the radio ☐
Play arcade games ☐
Go to the cinema ☐
Other:..

5 On average how much time do you spend playing computer games every week?
Less than 1 hour ☐
1-2 hours ☐
2-4 hours ☐
4-6 hours ☐
6-8 hours ☐
8-10 hours ☐
10-20 hours ☐
More than 20 hours ☐

6 What is your annual income?
Less than £6,000 ☐
£6000-£10,000 ☐
£10,000-£14,999 ☐
£15,000-£19,999 ☐
£20,000-£29,000 ☐
Over £30,000 ☐

7 Which of the following do you regularly buy?
CDs ☐ Tapes ☐
Videos ☐ Clothes ☐
Shoes/Trainers ☐ Sweets ☐
Crisps ☐ Drinks ☐
Takaway food ☐ Books ☐
Comics ☐
Something else, namely:..

8 Do you have a bank account?
Yes ☐ No ☐

9 What radio station(s) do you listen to:
Radio 1 ☐ Radio 2 ☐
Radio 3 ☐ Radio 4 ☐
Radio 5 ☐ Virgin ☐
Kiss FM ☐ Jazz FM ☐
Classic FM ☐ Capitol ☐
GLR ☐ LBC News ☐
Atlantic 252 ☐ Local ☐
None ☐

10 What type of television programmes do you mainly watch?
Breakfast ☐
Chatshow ☐
Comedy ☐
Current affairs ☐
Documentaries ☐
Sport ☐

11 What types of non-computer magazines do you buy/read:
Car ☐
Home entertainment/Hi-Fi ☐
Humorous ☐
General men's ☐
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Music ☐
Sport ☐
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None ☐

YOU AND YOUR PC

12 Which of the following describes your technical competence on a PC?
Expert ☐
Confidently competent ☐
Beginner beginning to get the hang of most things ☐
Complete beginner ☐

13 What is the specification of the PC you play games on:
386sx ☐ 386dx ☐
486sx ☐ 486dx ☐
486dx/2 ☐
586 Pentium ☐
Portable PC ☐

Processor (please specify):........................
RAM size (please specify):........................
Hard disk size (please specify):..................

Floppy disks:
3.5" ☐
5.25" ☐
Low density ☐
High density ☐

Graphics card:
CGA ☐
EGA ☐
VGA ☐
SVGA ☐
Other (please specify):.............................

Sound card:
None ☐
Adlib ☐
Sound Blaster ☐
Roland ☐
Other (please specify):.............................

Which version of DOS do you have?
MS-DOS 4 or earlier ☐
MS-DOS 5 ☐
MS-DOS 6 ☐
MS-DOS 6.2 ☐
DR-DOS ☐

Do you also use Windows?
Yes ☐ No ☐

14 Do you have, or intend to buy in the next 12 months, any of the following add-ons/peripherals?

	Own	Intend
Mouse	☐	☐
Game card and joystick	☐	☐
CD-ROM Drive	☐	☐
Modem	☐	☐
Printer:	☐	☐
Dot matrix	☐	☐
Inkjet	☐	☐
Laser	☐	☐

Other (please specify):.............................

15 How much of the time you spend using your PC is related to playing games?
100% ☐
75% ☐
50% ☐
25% or less ☐

16 What else do you use your PC for?
Education/Information ☐
Music ☐
Design ☐
Graphics & animation ☐
Programming ☐
Home/personal finance/general admin ☐

17 Which of the following machines do you own or have access to (perhaps via a friend)?

	Own	Access to
Sega Mega-CD	☐	☐
Sega Megadrive	☐	☐
Sega Game Gear	☐	☐
Sega Master System	☐	☐
Nintendo Super NES	☐	☐
Nintendo GameBoy	☐	☐
Nintendo NES	☐	☐
Atari Jaguar	☐	☐
Atari Lynx	☐	☐
Atari ST/Falcon	☐	☐
Amiga A500/600	☐	☐
Amiga A1200	☐	☐
Commodore CD32	☐	☐
Apple Macintosh	☐	☐
Acorn Archimedes	☐	☐
PC Engine	☐	☐
Neo Geo	☐	☐
Philips CD-i	☐	☐

3DO ☐ ☐
Other:..
None ☐

18 Which machine – if any – do you want to buy next?

Sega Mega-CD ☐
Sega Megadrive ☐
Sega Game Gear ☐
Sega Master System ☐
Nintendo Super NES ☐
Nintendo GameBoy ☐
Nintendo NES ☐
Atari Jaguar ☐
Atari Lynx ☐
Atari ST/Falcon ☐
Commodore Amiga A500 ☐
Commodore Amiga A1200 ☐
Commodore CD32 ☐
Apple Macintosh ☐
Acorn Archimedes ☐
PC Engine ☐
Neo Geo ☐
Philips CD-i ☐
3DO ☐
Sega MultiMega ☐
Sega Mars/Mega-32 ☐
Sega Saturn ☐
Nintendo Project Reality ☐
Sony PSX ☐
Other:..
None ☐

19 On average how many games do you buy?

Never buy games ☐
A couple every year ☐
One every three months ☐
One every couple of months ☐
One per month ☐
Two per month ☐
Three per month ☐
Four per month ☐
Five per month ☐
More than five ☐

20 How long have you been playing computer and video games?

A month or less ☐
1-3 months ☐
3-6 months ☐
6-12 months ☐
12-18 months ☐
18 months-2 years ☐
3-4 years ☐
4-6 years ☐
Over 6 years ☐

21 What type of PC games are you interested in? (Tick all those that apply)

Arcade style games ☐
Board and puzzle games ☐
Flight sims ☐
Graphic adventures ☐
Platform games ☐
Role-playing games ☐
Sports-simulations ☐

22 What do you think would be the best cover policy?

No disks at all
and reduce the price to £2.95 ☐
Two high-density disks at 3.95 ☐
Three high-density disks at £4.50 ☐
One CD-ROM disk at £4.99 ☐

23 On average, how much do you spend each month on games or games equipment?

Nothing ☐ Under £10 ☐
£10-24 ☐ £25-49 ☐
£50-74 ☐ £75-99 ☐
£100-149 ☐ £150-199 ☐
£200-299 ☐ Over £300 ☐

24 In order of preference, which of the following are the most important things that help you decide which game to buy?

(1 = most important, 10 = least important)

Games mag review ☐
Games mag preview ☐
Recommendation by a friend ☐
Saw an advert in a games mag ☐
Editorial coverage in
other types of magazine ☐
Saw it on TV ☐
Saw an advert on TV ☐
Saw a poster ☐
Saw it at an exhibition ☐
Shop demonstration ☐
Rent to try out first ☐
Something else, namely:..............................

25 What do you think of these games publishers? (Tick one box only per publisher.)

	Good	Okay	Poor	Don't know	Who?
Ocean	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
US Gold	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LucasArts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sierra	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MicroProse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mindscape	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Domark	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Electronic Arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Origin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gremlin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Infogrames	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Empire	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gametek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Virgin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sales Curve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interplay	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accolade	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Core Design	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Maxis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Renegade	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Codemasters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Psygnosis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sp. Holobyte	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other favourite
(please specify):..

26 Where do you normally buy your games and games equipment?

Dixons ☐ Virgin ☐
Woolworths ☐ Argos ☐
Comet ☐ Boots ☐
Toys R Us ☐ WH Smith ☐
Our Price ☐ HMV ☐
Curry's ☐ Rumbelows ☐
Future Zone ☐ John Menzies ☐
Game ☐ Blockbuster Video ☐
Ritz ☐ Tandy ☐
Beatties ☐ PC World ☐
Microbyte Games ☐
Mail order ☐
Specialist local shop ☐

ABOUT PC GAMES

27 Where do you usually buy your video games magazines from?

WH Smith ☐
John Menzies ☐
Martins ☐
Fourbuoys ☐
Tesco ☐
Sainsburys ☐
Asda ☐
Safeways ☐
7-Eleven ☐
Waitrose ☐
Petrol Station ☐
Local newsagent ☐
Subscription ☐
Somewhere else:..

28 Where would you prefer to buy PC GAMES?

Multiple outlet (e.g. Smiths, Menzies) ☐
Supermarket ☐
Local newsagent ☐
Service Station ☐
Multiple games outlet
(e.g. HMV) ☐

29 How many other people apart from yourself will see your copy of PC GAMES?

Nobody else ☐
One ☐
Two ☐
Three ☐
Four ☐
Five ☐
More than five ☐

30 Would you ever buy a game without seeing a review in PC GAMES?

Yes ☐ No ☐

31 How do you rate PC GAMES as a games mag? (10 = brilliant, 1 = rubbish) ☐

32 On a scale of 1 to 5, how much influence did the following have on your decision to buy PC GAMES?

(1 = little or no influence, 5 = very influential)

Contents of coverdisks ☐
Cover ☐
Review content ☐
Preview content ☐
Features ☐
Competitions ☐
Hints and tips ☐

33 Would you prefer PC GAMES to review:

Fewer games in more depth ☐
More games in less depth ☐
Keep the balance as it is ☐

34 What do you think of the content of PC GAMES?

About right ☐
Not enough features on games-related
hardware ☐
I'd like to see features on non-games
hardware and software ☐

35 Please rate the contents of this issue of PC GAMES on a scale of 1 to 5

(1 = rubbish; 5 = excellent):

Coverdisk demos ☐
Cover ☐
Disks! ☐
News ☐
Features ☐
Previews ☐
Reviews ☐
Tips ☐
Budget Reviews ☐
Shareware ☐
Glossary ☐
The Trouble Shooter ☐

36 What other magazines do you normally buy or see, or used to buy but don't anymore, and how would you rate them out of 10 (where 10 is brilliant and 1 is rubbish)?

	Buy	See	Used To Buy	Rate
PC Format	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC Gamer	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC Home	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC Player	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC Power	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC Review	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC Zone	☐	☐	☐	☐
Edge	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computer & Video Games (CVG)	☐	☐	☐	☐
GamesMaster	☐	☐	☐	☐
Video Games Shopper	☐	☐	☐	☐

37 How did you first find out about PC GAMES?

From a friend ☐
In a newsagent ☐
From a magazine ad ☐
At an exhibition ☐
From a TV show ☐
From a radio ad ☐
Somewhere else,
namely:..

38 How interested are you in seeing the following promotions in PC GAMES

(1 = not interested; 5 = extremely interested):

Tips books/maps/cards ☐
Supplements
(e.g. Top 100 games, etc.) ☐
Money-off vouchers ☐
Special offers ☐
Keyboard overlays ☐
Gadgets
(mousehouses/mats, etc.) ☐

39 Would you like to subscribe to PC GAMES?

Yes ☐ No ☐

40 If you could change one thing about PC GAMES to make it better what would it be?

....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....

41 If you have any suggestions that you feel may be of interest to us please feel free to include them on a separate piece of paper.

42 Last but not least:

Name:
Address:
Post Code:

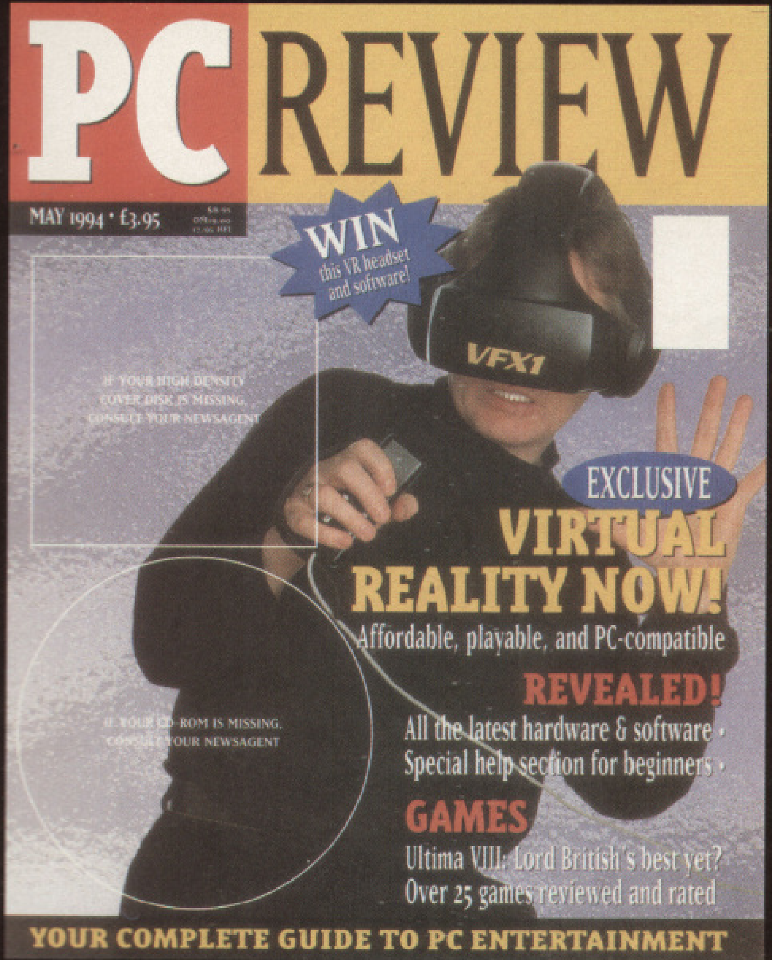
I would/would not (delete as applicable) be interested in taking part in further questionnaires regarding PC GAMES. This does not mean that my details will be given out to third parties for mailing purposes.

The address to send your fully completed forms to is:

Reader Survey,
PC GAMES,
Priory Court,
30-32 Farringdon Lane,
London EC1R 3AU.

And don't forget - your forms must be in by 6th July 1994 if you're to stand a chance of winning a prize! Good luck!

GREAT COVERAGE



PC REVIEW

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GAMES

Ultima VIII: Lord British's best yet?
Over 25 games reviewed and rated

IF YOUR CD-ROM IS MISSING, CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO PC ENTERTAINMENT

You spend ages choosing the right PC; the machine which delivers the best performance for money, one which can keep you ahead of the crowd, and most importantly, a machine which you can be proud of owning.

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PC REVIEW is the magazine which has been designed with all your needs in mind. It covers the latest technology and software, including the best games and how to play them. It also delivers the hottest previews and reviews of the latest developments in the PC arena.

Whether you're an old hand or a new user, PC REVIEW delivers the expert coverage you need to get the most from your machine.

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OUT ON THE 15TH OF EVERY MONTH!

NEXT ISSUE

PC

Right, that's yer lot. Now you're going to have to sit back and twiddle your thumbs furiously for two months until the next utterly amazing issue of PC GAMES hits the shelves. It's a pain but hey, you know it'll be worth the wait. Don't believe us? Then take a look at this line-up of top goodies...

TIE Fighter

You've played the demo, now read the completely definitive review! Will LucasArts' X-Wing sequel strike back or just strike out?

Desert Strike

Not only will there be a full review, but you'll also get a chance to try it out for yourself with our EXCLUSIVE demo!

Under A Killing Moon

Can Access make the term 'Interactive Movie' acceptable again with their star-studded CD venture...?

BioForge

...Or will that honour go to Origin with their brave new approach to the genre? Again, find out in our comprehensive reviews of both games.

1942 Pacific Air War

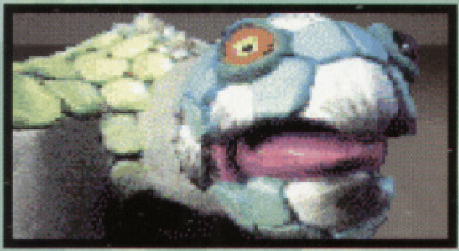
After the disappointment of Pacific Strike, will MicroProse's stunning-looking sim put WW2 flight fans right?

On top of that, there will be the usual gaggle of no-doubt-exclusive previews, in-depth features, hot news — in other words, all the vague stuff that magazines ramble on about when they have no real clue as to what the Hell will really be in the next issue.

PCGAMES.

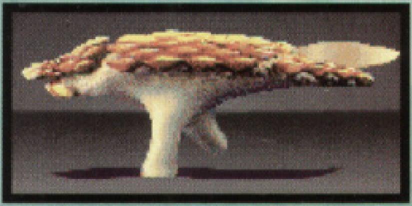
It'll be really good — trust us.
August/September issue on-sale June 29th.

UN NATURAL SELECTION



WHAT KIND OF MIND COULD

CREATE THESE



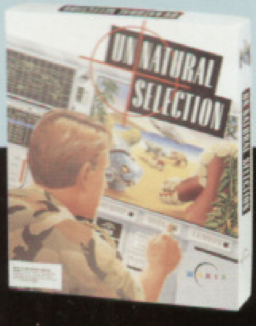
INCREDIBLE CREATURES ?

MAX
FULL
25%
OFF
CENSUS
DATABASE
FOOD
FLOW
INJECT

YOURS.

FIGHT 63
MATE 84
EAT 94
SPD 225
STR -136
STA 225
VIS 27
MOM 4
VRS 0

FIGHT
MATE
EAT
SPEED
STRENGTH
STAMINA
VISION
FIGHT
VIRUS
VIRUS

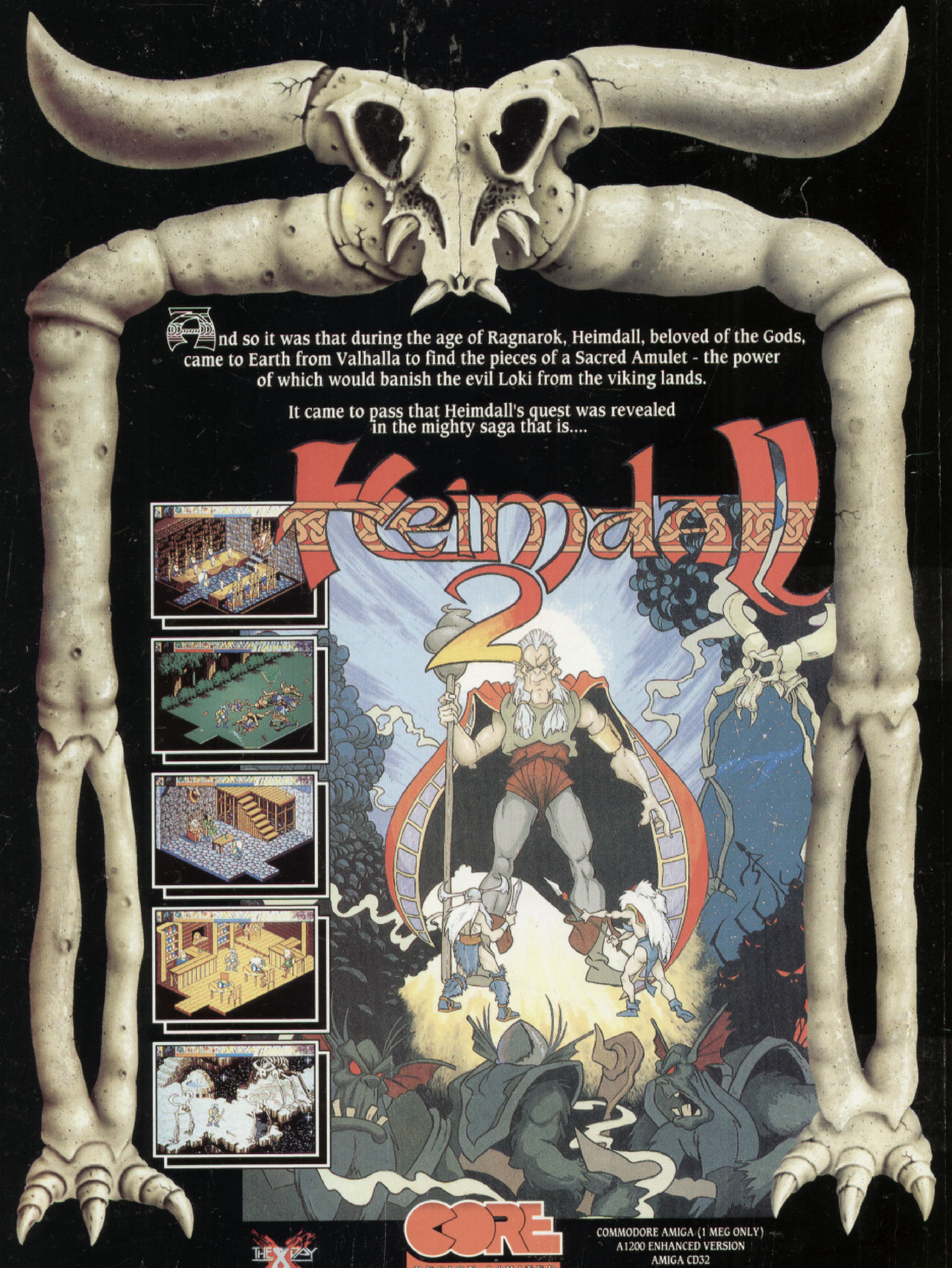

UN NATURAL SELECTION

When a mad scientist unleashes an army of mutant monsters on an unsuspecting group of islands, there's only one course of action. Head for the lab and breed your own monsters to fight back. In Maxis' new strategy game, stunning clay animation and digitised sound brings your genetic creations to life. To wipe out the enemy, you'll need more gene genius than Darwin.

'A serious strategy game....remarkably good fun' - PC Gamer
'If this was a movie, it would be a cult classic' - PC Review

MAXIS

Maxis Ltd 18-20 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY Telephone: 071-490 2333
Unnatural Selection software copyright 1993 Sim-Business



And so it was that during the age of Ragnarok, Heimdall, beloved of the Gods, came to Earth from Valhalla to find the pieces of a Sacred Amulet - the power of which would banish the evil Loki from the viking lands.

It came to pass that Heimdall's quest was revealed in the mighty saga that is....

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THE 8th DAY

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PC GAMES

IT'S NONE OF YER USUAL RUBBISH

JUNE/JULY 1994

3 INCRED
DEMO
TIE Fight
Heimdall
The Settl
Are we good t
or what?